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The Old Forts Taken

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THE OLD FORTS TAKEN.

THE OLD FORTS TAKEN

Five Lectures

ON

ENDLESS PUNISHMENT AND FUTURE LIFE

BY

REV. A. A. MINER, D.D.

BOSTON
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PREFACE.

So extraordinary has been the interest excited of late in the discussion of the doctrine of Endless Punishment, that, notwithstanding the numerous contributions thereto from all quarters, both at home and abroad, it has been thought that these Lectures might reach some minds to which more elaborate works would not gain access. They were delivered extemporaneously during the past season in the Columbus Avenue Universalist Church. The first four were phonographically reported, and revised by the author; while the fifth was written some months after its delivery.

THE AUTHOR.

BOSTON, May 13, 1878.

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ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

I.

THE OLD FORTS TAKEN.

"AND THE FORTRESS OF THE HIGH FORT OF THY WALLS SHALL HE BRING DOWN, LAY LOW, AND BRING TO THE GROUND, EVEN TO THE DUST." — *Isaiah* XXV. 12.

I NEED not remark the importance of walls and forts in the defence of ancient cities against the incursions of enemies. With means of warfare far less effective than those which prevail in modern times, a good wall about a city was a successful defence against every thing but the battering-ram; and, if strong enough, good even against that.

But it was the purpose of the fortresses, lifted far above the wall, so to command the view on all sides, as that, by the usual weapons of defence, the besiegers might be kept at bay. Generally, the holders of the forts were quite secure. But when these fortresses were levelled to the dust, the city was already taken.

So it is in the field of controversy. When doctrines long prevailing, and the propositions by which

they have been defended, have been successfully assailed; when close scrutiny and careful analysis have exposed their weakness, and candid minds have surrendered, — discomfiture already perches upon their banners, and the revolution is half effected. The army may not be entirely broken up; it may withdraw with some show of order, and throw up new intrenchments, which themselves must be subsequently carried; but victory is at length assured.

This is substantially the condition to-day of the cohorts of the doctrine of Endless Punishment. The varied defences of the doctrine which have been made prominent, and have been generally relied upon, have been cast down. One fortress after another upon the high towers has been laid low, even in the dust. I do not say that there is not many a sick and wounded soldier lingering still among the ruins; but I do say that a large part of the effective army has been taken captive, and is henceforth bound to service in the cause of truth.

Long ago was it conceded, notwithstanding the current quotations therefrom to the contrary, that the Old Testament does not teach the doctrine of endless, not even future, punishment. The declaration of Dr. George Campbell, a Scotch Presbyterian divine, made many years ago, that "it is plain that in the Old Testament the most profound silence is observed in regard to the state of the deceased,

their joys or sorrows, happiness or misery,"[1] is now accepted by scholars on all hands. It would be difficult to find a respectable Biblical critic who would now hazard his reputation by denying this proposition.

Yet among the Jews, before and in Christ's time, it is probable that the doctrine of endless punishment prevailed more or less extensively, — how extensively it is impossible to say. It does not appear that all the sects held it. The Sadducees, surely, did not. The pertinent query arises, — Whence came it? Did it grow up among them, as one or another error has grown up among every living nation on the face of the earth? Or was it imported into their midst from the pagan nations about them? The latter has been the prevalent view, and has in its favor the natural adaptation of so barbarous a doctrine (if it could ever be fitting) to the general thought and home-life of the pagan world. However that may be, the first that we know of the doctrine among the Jews is commonly, but perhaps erroneously, supposed to be taught us in the book of Enoch. The authorship of this book is quite uncertain. That it is apocryphal — utterly so — is the universal opinion. It has been attributed, on the one hand, to the old patriarch of that name; on the other, to some Jews of a later period, even as late as the time of the Maccabees. Still others suppose it to have origi-

[1] Dissertation VI., part ii. sect. 19.

nated among the Jews in Babylon or in Egypt. Come whence it may, and whensoever it may have arisen, it is supposed to have been quoted by the apostle Jude by name, and is quoted by several of the early Christian fathers. It was lost soon after the first Christian centuries, and was not recovered till about one hundred years ago, when the celebrated traveller, Bruce, met with copies of it in Abyssinia, in the Ethiopic language, into which it had been translated from the original Hebrew, through the Greek. In 1821,[1] it was re-translated into English by a professor of Oxford College, England.

This book bases the doctrine of endless punishment, not upon the fall of Adam, nor upon the original corruption of man, — of which it makes no mention whatever, — but upon the fall of angels, two hundred in number, definitely specified, who, seduced by the beautiful daughters of men, begat an unholy race of giants four hundred and fifty feet high; and these, by the power of magic, corrupted the whole human race. The book goes on to say, as we are told by the learned, that, in consequence of this fall, the angels were bound in everlasting chains against the judgment of the great day. It further informs us that, at the final judgment, wicked men also are to be consigned to a gaping hell, in the midst of flames of fire blazing brightly, with glittering mountains, as it were, whirled around and agitated from

[1] Some say, 1838.

side to side.[1] Apocryphal as it is, the book, of course, is of no account whatever, except as giving the earliest indication of a prevalence among the Jews, so far as we know, of the doctrine of endless punishment. Even the portions of this collection which most favor that doctrine may be Christian forgeries of a later date than the original work.[2]

The next mention, it is believed, of this doctrine among the Jews is in another apocryphal book, currently known as the second book of Esdras, or Ezra, inserted, with other apocryphal writings, between the Old and New Testaments, in many of our Bibles. We must not identify this work with the canonical book of Ezra that precedes that of Nehemiah; nor does the portion of the book contained in our Bibles teach the doctrine in question. It is alleged by the learned that, at verse 35 of chapter vii., there was formerly another chapter, in which the doctrine was distinctly laid down; which chapter, although it dropped out for a time, has of late years been recovered.[3]

This book bases the doctrine of endless punishment upon Adam's transgression, — not according to

[1] See "Universalist Expositor," vol. iv. art. 28; also, Beecher's "Doctrine of Scriptural Retribution," chap. x.

[2] See "Universalist Quarterly," 1878, art. 11. This able writer questions, and apparently with good reason, the consistency of the book on this subject, if not its teaching such a doctrine altogether.

[3] Beecher's "Doctrine of Scriptural Retribution," chap xi.

the philosophy that has prevailed in later times, but by the operation of a subtle law of evil, through which Adam has been made to corrupt all mankind. The study of the book, as we have it in our apocryphal collections, will show that a long controversy, on the merits of the doctrine of this subtle law and its consequences, whatever they may be, is carried on between the writer, Ezra, or whomsoever he may have been, on the one hand, and God and his angel, Uriel, on the other. Ezra is continually attacking, in the utmost wonder, the righteousness of the scheme by which such vast ruin is wrought; and the angel, speaking for God, is made to reply that it is impossible for men to understand it; nevertheless that it is a fact: and there it is made to rest. Dr. Edward Beecher says that Ezra's criticisms are by no means successfully answered; and throughout the protracted controversy he undoubtedly has the best of the argument.

In these two books are contained all the writings — scholars themselves being judges — known to have been extant among the Jews, down to Christ's time, in which the doctrine of endless punishment is even alleged to be taught; and of the truth of these interpretations there may be room for grave doubt. But let us remember that not one of the canonical books contains any allusion to the future "joys or sorrows, happiness or misery of the departed." These two apocryphal, irresponsible, and unauthentic works

alone affirm that doctrine, even if *they* affirm it, down to the time of Christ.

Among the Christians there sprang up, at length, the doctrine of endless punishment: not, however, until the opposite doctrine of Universalism had prevailed for several generations, and had been advocated by the first scholars of those times, — among whom was Origen of Alexandria, the head of the great Catechetical School, the founder of scientific theology, and confessedly the first scholar of the early centuries; nor, until after three of the five other great schools had been led by men who did not believe in the doctrine of endless punishment, did it come to hold a somewhat conspicuous place.

It has been variously based in Christian times — though by a different philosophy from that of the book of Ezra — upon the fall of Adam; of which views the two principal are: first, that the whole race was so identified with Adam that his sin became their guilt; and, second, that Adam was so the representative head of the race — like the man we send to the General Court as our representative to make the laws by which we are all bound — that as he sinned, all men sinned in him, and thus became amenable with him to all the punishment he deserved. The former of these views was the Augustinian, and prevailed more or less widely during and subsequent to the Augustinian age. The latter is that of the Calvinists in general, and has been the view of recent centuries.

I do not hesitate to say, friends, that no man, whose reason and judgment are not broken down by the weight of authority or force of education, can look either of those views in the face and say it is wise, or just, or good. Nay, I would undertake to say that without great and irrational flexibility of judgment no man can believe either of them. That God should have established hereditary and social relations among men, from which should flow more or less of evil, moral and physical, but which, in their final and broader operations, shall secure immensely greater good to every individual of the race, I can easily understand; and though they may cause pain and grief to the sensitive heart for the time being, a comprehensive philosophy may accept them and still believe that God is infinitely good. But that God, infinitely wise, powerful, and good, has so identified all souls with one individual as that his sin, without the consent of either party in interest, should have fatally and eternally corrupted and ruined the entire race, is simply past all human belief. I say, all human belief! I do not forget what barbarous ages have believed. I do not forget that we have such facts in history as human beings devouring each other; as wives, from a sense of religious duty, sacrificing themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands; as children leaving their aged and infirm parents in the wilderness to perish, and parents destroying their helpless infants, — all of

which examples, and the like of them, are infinitely weak in comparison with the enormity under consideration. I affirm nothing, however, of ignorant and superstitious ages. But to an enlightened age, with but a meagrely Christianized conscience, doctrines like these of which I am speaking are impossible I do not forget that Scripture is quoted in defence of them. I do not forget that the Scriptures, by a bold figure, speak of our dying in Adam; since, inheriting the same physical nature and tendencies as he, we copy his example and share his fate. But if an attempt be made to silence reason by Scripture, then must Scripture be held to a fair exposition. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." If we will have it that men die in Adam without their personal agency, then as a matter of fair treatment of Scripture, honorable dealing with men, and defence of divine goodness, let us admit that they are made alive in Christ without their personal agency. I do not, of course, suggest that we do die in Adam without our personal agency; nor that we are made alive in Christ without our personal agency. The propositions, however, must stand or fall together. But we need not dwell here. These defences of the doctrine of endless punishment have been practically abandoned. These walls have been battered down, and their fortresses levelled in the dust.

You will observe that the doctrine of the ruin of the race through the fall of Adam involves in itself

the whole question of original sin and entire native depravity, which some professedly scientific teachers of theology about us are unconsciously refuting, by affirming, and continually re-affirming, that the law of evil tends to permanence of evil character; as though character born of original sin and total depravity were not sufficiently grounded in evil, and possessed of sufficiently vicious momentum, to hold its way without extraneous aid, but needed strengthening from the start.

We come now to another defence long felt to be a strong fortress of the doctrine, although almost never urged at present; namely, the assumption that "sin is infinite." True, it is committed by poor, finite, ignorant, and often unconscious (or but half conscious) man; committed in heat, under all the temptations and trials of Nature and of social life; committed oftentimes thoughtlessly: nevertheless, since it is a transgression of the law of the infinite God, it takes on the proportions and magnitude of the authority against which it is perpetrated. We hear very little of this to-day; though half a century ago all the pulpits of the land were ablaze with the imputation of infinite sin, and the necessity, therefore, of infinite punishment. But the irresistible assaults which have been made upon it have well-nigh driven it from the light of day.

In the first place, if an act of man transgressing a law of God is an infinite act, an act of the same

man obeying the law would also be infinite; and thus we have not infinite sin alone, but infinite virtue as well. And if both merit and demerit infinitely abound, the prospect of a heaven of infinite blessedness will be quite as assured as the danger of a hell of infinite woe; for where is the soul that has never even once obeyed?

Again, all degrees of sin are necessarily swept away by this assumption; so that the New Testament doctrine of rewarding men according to their deeds becomes a fiction; beating some with few stripes and some with many, according to their degrees of demerit, is a fiction; and human distinctions in the administration of criminal law, by which one man is fined, another imprisoned, and another executed upon the scaffold, rest upon grounds that are entirely fictitious.

Yet again: if every sin is infinite, and deserves infinite punishment, then it deserves not simply punishment that is infinite in duration, but also infinite in degree. The necessary result of such reasoning is that every single sin deserves the greatest and longest-continued punishment that infinite power can inflict. Such a result, properly presented, ought to satisfy the most insatiable appetite for agony, and awaken fresh and transcendent applause in Tremont Temple in the noon-tide blaze of every returning Monday.

But we have not yet touched bottom. All this is

for *one* sin; and the sinner goes on, during a life of eighty years, adding sin to sin, mountain high; justice, meanwhile, exhausting the divine wrath in the futile attempt to render adequate punishment for even one of them; while all the rest are crying to heaven in vain for vengeance. Thus is the goodness of God obscured, and the garments of our Lord, whose grace abounds far more widely than sin, trailed in the dust. Such is the sad extreme to which a remorseless philosophy concerning the divine judgments logically reduces us.

Before the growing light of the ages, this doctrine of infinite sin has shrunk away and withdrawn from the public gaze. Whether it is still written in the creeds matters little; for much is written there that the men of to-day totally disregard. This fortress, I make no hesitation in saying, has been levelled in the dust. There probably is not a clergyman in Boston who will stand in his place and re-affirm it.

Nor do we find the doctrine rested as formerly on the naked presentation of law and penalty. It was formerly claimed, as though it involved the entire agency of God in regard to human destiny, that God, having made man a moral being, has placed before him life and good, death and evil; given him law, to which is attached the penalty of everlasting woe; informed him that this is his life of trial or probation, and eternity the world of retribution; and as his life shall be found to have been at the great

day, so eternity will be decreed. The Calvinistic decree of masses of men, before birth, to eternal perdition unbearably shocked Arminianism; but it was not at all shocked by the same decree pronounced at the moment of death. The practical difference in the two was in their dates, — on an average, about thirty-three and a third years apart.

The goodness of God is assumed to be vindicated on the ground that he has put the question fairly before men; and, if they do not choose life and good, it is simply their own fault. My friends, lift the veil a moment, and look back over the pages of history. Has that issue been placed before all men? Have infants, idiots, pagans, all nations, been brought into the light of Christianity? Has it been placed before every person even in Christian lands? Has it been presented in all its length and breadth before even a single soul? The query carries with it its own answer.

But it is said that the case is not quite so dark as the critics describe it. It is probable that all infants dying in infancy will be saved. This secures the destiny of half the race. True; but on what ground can this assumption rest? It ignores the doctrine of original sin, and bears half mankind in total corruption to heaven, without even an opportunity or the capacity for choosing, — without the lapse of the briefest period in which they might choose. According to all the logic of the case these, with the heathen

world in its utter depravity, must of necessity be consigned to everlasting woe. There are also millions of Christians who, on Orthodox grounds, have no more hope of salvation than pagans themselves. Yet we have the confession that a majority of mankind will be saved.

How is this made to appear? Not, surely, by a study of the past. Singularly, just here, Orthodoxy turns upon its heel, and assumes that in the future the number of the faithful will be relatively much increased; that divine light will so shed its effulgence upon the world that the millions will believe, and the few only remain unbelieving. This is a gracious conception, and one would hope the prophecy true. But upon what does it stand? Upon the generous sentiments of the human heart, which cry out against the abominations of Orthodoxy, and which we are cautioned not to trust. If they may be trusted to this extent, why not in their suggestions for the few remaining?

A still more important position claims our attention. The modern defenders of the doctrine assume that it is not for the sins of this life that men will be eternally punished; that walking in the pathways of transgression strengthens the tendencies to sin, and permanent sinful character is the consequence; and because men will sin for ever they will be punished for ever. This, it will be observed, is new ground. It is no longer endless punishment for the sins of

this life. It is practically yielding the doctrine that this life is one of probation and the next one of retribution, because it is in irreconcilable conflict with it. In this surrender must be embraced the entire catalogue of doctrines and Scripture expositions therewith logically connected. Thus do the still steadfast friends of the doctrine of endless punishment, not the thousands who have repudiated it alone, abandon its old defences.

This brings me to the Scriptural fortresses of the doctrine. In the first place, there arises to our thought here the entire roll of fire penalties, — the unquenchable fire; the furnace of fire; the lake of fire burning with brimstone; everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. These and like phrases have been adduced, from time immemorial, in defence of the doctrine of endless punishment; and with reasonings, expressed or implied, much after this fashion: "We see nothing in this world that corresponds to these representations. Surely, they cannot mean the gnawings of a guilty conscience; they cannot signify the remorse which preys upon the guilty soul. The style is too flaming, too lofty, too burning, too awful!" When Universalists, half a century ago, alleged that these passages of Scripture must be understood metaphorically, as expressive of the present invisible woes of the sinful soul, they were accused of "prophesying smooth things," of "daubing with untempered

mortar," of "taking away from the word of God." Now, I summon you to observe, there is not an intelligent Protestant pulpit in the land but admits that they are not to be literally understood. The position that the phrase "everlasting fire," and other kindred phrases, apply literally to the next world, has been entirely surrendered. And, therefore, if these do mean, as is now conceded on all hands, the remorse of a guilty soul, the pangs of a moral sense, the domination of a guilty conscience, — since these are experienced here, there remains no implication that they must apply, even metaphorically, to another world. This fortress, therefore, is carried.

Nor is the conclusion in any wise modified by the designation of the fire as everlasting. The Greek word so translated is conceded by scholars, on all hands, to mean what our own Church has for a century maintained. It primarily implies quality rather than time; and, when referring to time, it is altogether indefinite, depending for its force upon the subject to which it is applied. There is much virtual reasoning in a circle here: punishment is endless because called everlasting; and everlasting means endless because applied to punishment. In the most valuable work on this subject yet written,[1] and in the testimony of leading exegetes on both sides of the Atlantic, the truth is made quite clearly to appear. In the earliest classical use of the noun from which

[1] Rev. Dr. Hanson's, of Chicago.

the words "everlasting" and "eternal" are derived, it does not mean duration at all, but simply life. Of this there are many examples. Homer says: "For life (aion) has been destroyed." Again: "Too early hast thou perished from life" (aion). The god Mercury is described as destroying the life (aion) of a mountain tortoise.[1] From being applied to life itself, it comes at length to be applied to the duration or term of life; and so we have the meaning "age;" and, by a still further remove, any specific age, or dispensation, — as the Jewish age, or the Mosaic dispensation. Another step in modification of its meaning gives to it the sense of the word "world," as applied to any general state of things; as when we say, "The world is upside down," — not meaning the world physically, but the general state of affairs. When the Scriptures speak of an age-long punishment, — the age-long dispensation of Aaron, — they speak indefinitely. To assume that when the term is applied to punishment it means endless, is to deny that punishment is in its nature corrective, and to assume that it is necessarily unceasing. It is bad reasoning to say that these words apply equally to the life of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked, and that they must, therefore, mean just as much in the one case as in the other. In the very examples of Scripture, we are compelled to yield such an in-

[1] Beecher's "Doctrine of Scriptural Retribution," chap. xv., from which these examples are quoted.

terpretation. The mountains are not as enduring as God; the priesthood of Aaron long ago came to an end. In many ways it appears that these words are used in regard to various things in a very indefinite sense.

Now if we assume that punishment is necessarily endless, we have assumed our argument, independent of the word "everlasting;" but if we assume it to be in harmony with other exhibitions of divine goodness; to be an instrumentality subordinate to goodness; a means of correction and chastisement, — we have something in the nature and intent of punishment that limits its continuance. Then the word rendered "everlasting," having, in its New Testament signification, both something of quality and something of time indefinite, most happily presents it in its divinest light. Substantially to this result the scholarship of the ages has at length come; and the fortress built of the words rendered "everlasting" and "eternal" is practically overthrown.

Professor Tyler defends the usual limitarian view in this controversy, without, however, denying the wide signification and various modifications in the meaning of the terms rendered "everlasting" and "eternal." In the course of his discussion, he makes this significant remark: "The words 'hell' and 'damnation' may well be changed in our version, because the latter is not used now in the sense in which it was used in the time of our translators;

and the former is used to render 'sheol' in the Old Testament, and both 'hades' and 'gehenna' in the New, to neither of which is it exactly equivalent, still less to all."[1] Canon Farrar expurgates from a proper translation of the New Testament, not only the words "hell" and "damnation," but also the word "everlasting;" without which three words, he intimates, the popular doctrine of hell would have no foundation.[2]

In this connection, Matt. xxv. 31–46 merits consideration. If assumed to be a description of a general and final judgment, with the penalty of endless punishment appended as the portion of those on the left hand, we encounter certain other difficulties which must not be overlooked: first, it is so closely identified, by the connectives with which the several paragraphs open, with the preceding parts of the discourse, running through Matt. xxiii. and xxiv., that the whole is seen to present the successive stages of one great event or series of events, restricted, in Matt. xxiv. 34, to the lifetime of the generation then on the earth; secondly, Matt. xxv. 31–46 is clearly parallel to Matt. xvi. 27, 28, where the events are limited, though in different terms, within the same compass; and thirdly, the judgment, whensoever it was to transpire, was based, not on perpetual sinning, but on sins already committed:

[1] The New Englander, March, 1878, p. 232.
[2] Eternal Hope, sermon iii.

"I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." It is thus placed out of harmony with the prominent modern defence of the doctrine of eternal perdition,—namely, perpetual sinning.

Another surrender, quite important in this connection, is the construction put upon the Saviour's language when asked (Luke xiii. 23), "Are there few that be saved?" He said: "Enter in at the straight gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." If this language applies to the final condition of mankind, as commonly supposed, it is conclusive of the proposition that the mass of mankind will be lost, and a select few only saved. The doctrine, then, that the great mass will be saved, and that the number lost, as compared with the number saved, will be no more than the number in our penitentiaries compared with the whole population, compels a new application of the Saviour's language, and a new interpretation of its import. In like manner, the doctrine of the literal wrath of God, literal banishment from His presence, and literal separation of one class of per-

sons from another even in the judgment which they still teach, is no longer affirmed by the more scholarly defenders of endless punishment.

Almost numberless are the converts among leading men, in pulpit and press, to a defence, in one form or another, of the great hopes of the gospel. Dr. Parker, of Hartford, looks upon the doctrine of the endless punishment of the mass of men, who have never heard of Christ or have never accepted him, as "intolerable and outrageous!" "Rather than preach such a doctrine," says he, "I would be for ever dumb."[1] Dr. Arthur Crosby, Presbyterian, of New York, said, "He could not conceive of eternal punishment except on the basis of eternal sinning." Rev. Nathan Hubbell, Methodist, "could not believe it at all."[2] Dr. Wheedon, of the "Methodist Quarterly," said, years ago, that there is a class of loving, pure-hearted Christians, "in other respects, Orthodox, to whom such a retribution is utterly unthinkable."[3]

Prof. Diman, of Brown University, said in King's Chapel, Boston: "I affirm that there is no warrant whatever for erecting the bald, literal dogma of everlasting punishment into an article of the Christian faith." "Not a few clergymen of the Church

[1] Quoted from "Universalist Quarterly;" April, 1878, p. 230.

[2] Quoted by the same from the "New York Herald."

[3] Universalist Quarterly, for April, 1878, where many other testimonies may be found.

of England," says the "Guardian," a journal of that church, "are maintaining that the doctrine of the endlessness of moral evil and of the pain it involves is nowhere taught in the New Testament." The "New York Herald" says: "It is very evident that Universalism is spreading itself very slowly but very surely among all denominations." Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Quakers, and Jewish Rabbis, — all enter into the discussion, and the darker doctrines of the Church are widely repudiated. The secular press and the weightier magazines and quarterlies bear prominent parts in the "Great Controversy;" and, in general, either place the old doctrine on the new ground of endless sinning, or repudiate it altogether. Both are substantial surrenderings of the "Old Forts."

When the southern army was overthrown by the northern, they were not all taken captive. There are many wounded in this battle who must have time to recover before they will have strength for confession. There are some misguided souls to whom the light has not come, and who must be granted a merciful parole. But the old fortresses have been carried; and we hope to satisfy you, in the next lecture, that the "New Forts" are equally indefensible.

Meantime, let us recall one or two truths about which there is no controversy. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" but no long time elapses, nor does any great gulf intervene between that death

and the sinning soul. Contrariwise, as Prof. Diman says, "Death flows out of sin," — a doctrine that is coming to be widely accepted. Transgression is the very seed of woe. Punishment is born of sin; and, so far as it is moral, or pertains to conscience, it cannot, strictly speaking, survive its parent. If men sin in eternity, that will doubtless be the best place to deal with them for it. But the pretence that men who sin on earth must of necessity wait their punishment in eternity has no Biblical foundation on which to rest. Contrariwise, "he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 8). "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa. lvii. 20). "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner" (Prov. xi. 31). On the other hand, "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. cxix. 165).

Scriptures like these ought to satisfy us in respect to the way of life and peace; and the soul, accustomed to walk in the pathways of obedience, will never yearningly turn aside to the pathway of sin for joy and satisfaction.

II.

THE NEW FORTS INDEFENSIBLE.

"THE KING'S HEART IS IN THE HAND OF THE LORD, AS THE RIVERS OF WATER: HE TURNETH IT WHITHERSOEVER HE WILL." — *Proverbs* xxi. 1.

TO-NIGHT I ask your meditation upon "The New Forts Erected for the Defence of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment."

In the preceding lecture we have endeavored to show you that the former prominent grounds of defence and justification of the doctrine of ceaseless punishment in the world to come, have been substantially abandoned. Very many leading minds, outside the denomination known as Universalist, at home and abroad, have avowed their surrender of the doctrine, and in general have accepted and echoed the very reasons which have prevailed among us for a century. While many leaders have thus abandoned the Old Forts, seeing them crumbling about their heads, millions of the laity — a multitude that no man can number — have found happy deliverance from such terrible prison-houses, and from the severest and most oppressive intellectual

and moral burden ever laid upon the souls of men. There remain, however, believers of the doctrine, who are presenting chiefly new grounds of defence. These grounds are stated in various forms, but may be summed up in the three following propositions: —

First, sin is self-perpetuating, and will, therefore, continue for ever. There is a law of human nature by which bad character tends to permanence, and therefore to everlasting transgression; and as punishment is always involved in sin, since sin will continue for ever, punishment also will of necessity continue for ever.

Secondly, the goodness of God, so often adduced in refutation of the doctrine of endless sin and suffering, is inconclusive to such an end, for the reason that we have sin and suffering here; and yet, confessedly, on all hands, God is now good. And since God is as incapable of a little wrong as of a great one, and since a little sin is of the same nature as much, and temporal sinning of the same nature as eternal sinning, — if a good being can permit limited sinning, the same goodness can permit eternal sinning.

Thirdly, however we may feel in doubt about the significance or conclusiveness of special passages of Scripture as bearing on the doctrine of endless punishment, there can be no doubt, it is alleged, that the trend of Scripture, the ground-swell of the

pages of inspiration, is to the doctrine of eternal woe.

We might amplify these in varied forms of statement, but they would come substantially to the positions before us.

In the first place, I call your attention to the fact that the first proposition is out of harmony with, and in contravention of, all the old grounds of defence. Consider: The doctrine we now have before us is that sin is self-perpetuating; that character tends to permanence in evil, not less than good, and therefore to everlasting sinning; and that, as punishment always follows sin, everlasting punishment is the natural and necessary result. The doctrine of everlasting punishment is thus made consequent upon everlasting sinning. The old doctrine was that of probation, — that we are placed on trial here, and if we live in and leave this world sinful, we shall be sentenced to perpetual woe for that sinfulness. The conflict between these two propositions is obvious.

It must be remembered, too, that the entire theory inculcated for the centuries gone by is, that eternal punishment in the next world is in retribution for the sins of this world; that sin is infinite; and because it is infinite, — or for whatever reason you please, — merits endless punishment; and that it is specifically for the sins of this life that we are to be punished in the life to come. But, according to the modified theory, man will be punished in the life to

come only for his sins committed in the life to come, and only because punishment always treads on the heels of transgression.

Again, this defence of endless punishment modifies the usual application of Matthew xxv. 31–46, and cannot be reconciled with that application. If a general and final judgment be supposed to be involved in that passage, it undeniably rests on past acts. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was athirst, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." The modified doctrine does not rest endless punishment on past sins, but on continued sinning; and therefore nullifies the usual application of that passage, making some other explanation necessary. To be sure, it was always a manifestly mistaken application; but the modified doctrine is a logical confession of the mistake, which I beg you to observe.

Still further, if, as this doctrine declares, sin will continue for ever, thus meriting endless punishment, why a general judgment at all? Its inadequacy is apparent; for, if the relatively few sins of this life demand a general judgment for their exhibition and adjustment at the end of this life, why will not continually recurring judgments be required for the infinitely more numerous sins of the eternity to come? How is it that the sins of

the brief seventy years allotted to man demand a general judgment for their exhibition before the face of the whole universe, and the sins of the whole eternity to follow require no such exhibition?

I might detain you long in pointing out the discrepancies between the modified positions of the present advanced believers of the doctrine, and the attitudes held by former defenders.

But enough. I call your attention to these discrepancies for this purpose: That you may observe that while a vast multitude, as has been shown, constituting the more intelligent portion, clerical and lay, in all the churches, have abandoned the Old Forts, and have confessed the doctrine false, these men have likewise abandoned the old arguments, but are still seeking new ones in defence of the old doctrines.

Let us now pass to notice these new positions themselves. We shall, I think, find them as little defensible as were the old.

In the first place, then, sin is not self-perpetuating. The sinner may — often does — continue sinful for a protracted period; but sin itself is not self-perpetuating. It is, rather, self-destructive.

We may find an analogy in the decaying vegetable in the streets: all agencies prey upon it; the very forces of Nature dissipate it, and purify the atmosphere that is infected by it. So it is with sin. All the forces of the universe are arrayed against it.

The conscience of the sinner himself; the conscience and general law of society about him; the deep under-tow of Nature; the ground-swell of the universe, and the purposes of Almighty God,— all conspire to crush sin and the sinful schemes of men.

Look where you will, and you find every thing compelling this view. God has not vacated his throne; he is not sustaining schemes of corruption; he is not in league with the devil.

Observe specific examples. Unfortunately we are only too well circumstanced to weigh this problem in some of its aspects. Our fathers were pleased to plant the seeds of a style of slavery in our country's soil, more oppressive than which the sun never shone upon. It grew with our growth; it shot out its tendrils and fastened like a clinging vine to every interest of our entire land. It suborned Congress, the pulpit, the public conscience, and Biblical interpretation to its own purposes; and, seemingly, won heaven and earth to its support.

Its efforts were not in vain. For a time it moved on successfully. Its progress was marked, and its bearing lofty. But there were powers superior. God was still God. His forces were slowly at work. The moral sense of men was not eliminated. There necessarily grew up a conflict, a struggle, a warfare, which culminated in the manner you know. The result was the breaking of the bonds of the slave, and the destruction of an institution that leaves

an ineffaceable blot upon our otherwise good name. We now understand that instead of the sin of slavery being self-perpetuating, its destruction was provided for in the moral forces of society, and in the providence of Almighty God.

Look into the pages of history. Read the records of any tyrannical reign. Observe that however king or emperor may oppress his people and weigh them down, he cannot perpetuate his power. The more severe the oppression and weight of the burden become, the more certain are his subjects to rebel, and his throne to totter to its fall. His son may succeed him and prove as tyrannical as the father; but a like rebellion will follow. Thus, instead of a self-perpetuating power in sin, the forces of the universe are invincibly arrayed against it, and against the schemes of iniquity bound up in it.

Nor does evil in character, on the whole, tend to permanence, as does the good. Good character is buttressed by all the invincible energies of God. Goodness is in harmony with all enduring things in heaven and on earth; but evil is in dissonance therewith. As in general schemes of iniquity, so in the wickedness of individual character, there are elements of antagonism conflicting with the moral forces of society. By these forces, permanence in evil is absolutely barred.

I grant you what the Scriptures say, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving

and being deceived." If this law of society were framed for perpetuity, our position would be untenable; but this drift is only temporary, and the evil consequently is temporary. This is shown in the history of the chosen people of God. They "waxed worse and worse," corrupting and being corrupted, "deceiving and being deceived;" until, having filled up the measure of their wickedness, their house was about to be left unto them desolate. They were as dead branches ready to be pruned away from the vine. But they were to be grafted in again, to the inexpressible amazement of the apostle, in view of the wondrous wisdom and goodness of God. They were to be aroused from their sleep in sin. The hour was coming, when, conscious of their wanderings, they should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Something like this often happens with wicked men individually. Left to themselves, with no missionary effort on their behalf, under no reformer's plea, but with rational powers; with perception, reason, and judgment; with an enlightened conscience that distinguishes right and wrong, — we not unfrequently see men walk in the ways of evil until character is utterly lost, and hope seems to have entirely departed; and yet from all the various ranks of such men we see specimens of the worst among them come forth, of their own motion, and walk in newness of life.

You remember the case of the prodigal. That parable well illustrates this truth. He was a favorite son; and I make no doubt had you stood at the father's threshold when he took his leave, you would have said, "He is a fine fellow, and will make his mark in the world." He did; but what a mark! Having taken one false step, the progress is rapid from bad to worse. Unbridled passion plunges one into the depths; and surprise attends upon awaking to an appreciation of the fall. He soon spent his patrimony, and was reduced to want. Fain would he have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave to him.

Not only did no missionary solicit his return, but the elder brother even was displeased at the joyousness of his welcome. The father, however, had not forgotten his son; and that son, true to the instincts of a filial heart, never forgot the parental roof. He had squandered his substance, disgraced his kindred, and covered himself with shame. But he remembered there was "bread enough in his father's house and to spare." He remembered that it was his *father's* house; and he said, "I will arise and go to my father."

That is human nature in an extremity, I grant you, manifesting the fruits of divine discipline in debauchery and licentiousness. May it not be that if, in our civilization, we would leave debauchees to endure the evils of their debauchery, ministering only

to the victims of their sin, that more prodigals would arise and go to their father's house? Are we sure that we do not curse them deeply in our very charities? Are we sure that we do not traverse the divine methods, and bar the work of human redemption? We undertake to improve on those methods, as business men have undertaken to improve upon the natural laws of trade; but we rarely go far without finding ourselves entangled.

The truth is, this doctrine of the permanence of character in evil leaves God out of the account. Those who defend it remember sin, guilt, demerit, punishment, hell, the devil, every thing indeed that the imagination can conjure for evil; but forget the infinite God, the merciful Christ, the rejoicing of angels over one sinner that repenteth, the prayerful yearnings of just men, the abounding grace of heaven, the promised victory over sin, and the universal subjection of man to Christ, "that God may be all in all!" These things are forgotten! These glowing lights of heaven are blotted out!

Now character, in fact, does not on the whole tend to permanence in evil, as these varied hints serve to show. The problem is not unlike that which Malthus — one of the most reputable political economists of his age — presents in regard to the growth of population. Malthus asserts that population increases geometrically; while food upon given areas can increase only arithmetically. With what-

ever ratio you start, the geometrical will at length outrun the arithmetical; and hence, he says, population is destined to increase till there will be no adequate means of support, and the race will be reduced to starvation. Professor Bowen, of Harvard, takes up the proposition and demonstrates that while there are certain elements in the problem, which taken by themselves tend to the danger threatened, there are other influences, such as motives of prudence and a desire to rise in social position, which hold the former in check. He thus demolishes the theory of Malthus.

Now I grant that if, dealing with a man the slave of appetite and passion, you shut him up to indulgence in the midst of temptation, at the same time blotting out every star of hope, and teaching him that he is so corrupt by nature that nothing short of a miracle can save him, — you have a good preparation for his permanence in evil. It must be confessed that the churches have shown a genius for convincing men that something like this is the very attitude in which God has placed them.

If, on the other hand, you place that same man where the light of Nature, where the better influences of social life, and especially where the manifestations of divine grace, shining from the sacred page, and through the ministries of a truly Christian church, may be enjoyed, — the tendency will not be to continued evil. There will be, rather, a continual

rebellion of all that is best within him against evil, against yielding to temptation, be that temptation whatsoever it may.

No examples are furnished us in the history of the world, so far as either experience or observation can testify, justifying the assumption, even in a single case, of absolute permanence in evil; and to assume such permanence touching the world to come, is to project into the problem influences and facts we do not find there, and to exclude not a few of those we do find.

It has seemed to me, as I have meditated upon this problem, that the genius of the world was taxing its powers to discover how to magnify to the maximum the probabilities of evil, and reduce to the minimum the probabilities of good. Such cannot be called a Christian work. Enter any of the churches, to-day, up and down our goodly city, and it will be rare if you are not told that the love and mercy of God have redeemed such and such a soul on whom the terrors of divine wrath had formerly been poured out in vain. That fact teaches a philosophy that the churches in the past have ignored; and because they have ignored it, their power for the general redemption of society has been well-nigh lost.

But it is objected that God will force no man's will. As men are now free, and rebel against the law of God, so they may remain free and continue

to rebel; and if God abandons men to freedom and to evil, there is no hope for them.

It is true that God will force no man's will. He will force no man's will toward evil, — remember that, as well, — and no man's will toward good. But the very work to be accomplished in man is the recovery of the will; the winning of the heart from the way of rebellion, from the attitude of alienation. That work God will do, and is doing continually. Every true servant of God, and every follower of Christ our Master, is doing more or less to persuade the wills of men; to put away rebellion; to induce loyal, willing souls to come to God. Dare any one affirm that is a work God will not do? Where is the Christian, even in name, that is ready to stand upon his feet and say, God makes no effort to win rebellious souls, or to make his now rebellious children willing and obedient to his law?

Let your thought turn for a moment to our text. It plainly asserts the power of God over the heart. It refers not to the poor alone; not to the lowly woman in attic or cellar; not to the abandoned outcast in the station-house, the courts, or the prison; but it refers to the great of the earth, who, the Scriptures inform us, and we all know, oppress their fellows. Of him it declares, —

"The King's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever he will."

Again, the Psalmist says: —

"My people shall be willing in the day of my power."

Passages of Scripture like these have no elements of rhetorical flourish in them; they are in no danger of being misconstrued; they cannot lead us astray. But they show us one thing — God, a power for good among his people. They show us the God of heaven, of whom the Saviour says, "My father worketh hitherto, and I work." Conceive Him, with his infinite resources, at "*work*" for the redemption of sinful souls! Conceive Him, standing face to face with poor, weak, passionate man, plying him with all the persuasives of His illimitable universe, and yet finally discomfited! Pray, where then remains ground for reverence, or encouragement to trust? Plainly, if God shall "work" for the winning of souls to himself, defeat cannot attend his efforts.

The defenders of the doctrine of the permanence of evil cannot, of course, leave it in this plight. A God who holds even the hearts of kings in his hand cannot be admitted a perpetual "worker" in the field of salvation. He must retire from such a service. Not only must he cease his efforts to save, but he must close the door of human freedom, lest the sinner should voluntarily repent, and the cause of righteousness triumph. This can be easily effected. God has but to decree, in a final judgment, the perpetual sinning of those who die sinful. Such a pen-

alty, it is thought, will meet all the gracious needs of the case. Endless sinning will entail endless suffering; and so dire a judgment will vindicate the divine holiness.

This vitally changes the proposition, and changes it immeasurably for the worse. Consider: Here is a man born under alien influences; reared in darkness, with no adequate culture, intellectual or moral; inhaling pollution with his very first breath. The first sound that greets his ears is an oath; the first sight upon which his eyes rest is obscene. He is steeped in the iniquity of that criminal state in whose bosom, as in a mould, his moral character is cast. He continues, as he has begun, to the end of life; dying, as he has lived, confessedly sinful.

Now, the righteous Ruler of all the earth calls that sinful soul before him and adjudges him. How? Guilty? We all knew that before judgment. That was clear enough. The sinner himself knew it, dimly, vaguely. Not that is the judgment; but on that admission he adjudges him to go on sinning, — not simply of his own free will, not by the influence of society about him, not by the force of moral and social training, but by the decree of Almighty God himself, — to go on sinning through vast eternity, with damnation, quick and sharp, flowing from every act!

And this punishment God inflicts upon him in vindication of his own wisdom, power, purity, love of

righteousness, and the transcendent and infinite regard for holiness which ever dwells with the Almighty!

Now, saying nothing of the absurdity of the ethics which make compulsory acts sinful, pray observe how shocking is this sentence! Were God to cease his work against sin, he would cease to be holy. What shall we say, when he employs his infinite energies in perpetuating sin, and that through limitless eternity, — compared to which the sins of a human lifetime would be less than a single ray of light to the effulgence of the noonday sun!

Suppose an inebriate were brought before one of our courts, and, the fact being clearly proved, the judge in great compassion should lecture him on the awful sin of inebriety, impressing him with the fact that it blunts the sensibilities, deadens the conscience, undermines the physical constitution, breaks the heart of one's wife, blasts the prospects of one's children, and curses society in general; and, after expressing great pity for the criminal at the bar that he had fallen under the influence of this destructive appetite, should proceed to sentence him to be inebriated throughout the remainder of his life! Spontaneously the moral sense of the community would burst forth in unutterable indignation. And yet, such is the bald, boastful blasphemy that has resounded through Tremont Temple week after week for the last two years, adorned with all the

cheap tinsel and flourishes of pretended science that the imagination of the orator could invent!

We come now to our second point, which we shall have time to treat but very briefly.

In the second place, it is said that this appeal — which we confidently make, as you will observe — to divine goodness, purity, and righteousness, to parry the thought that God sentences men to sin as a punishment for sin, is not valid; for, confessing that God is now good, and yet that sin and suffering now exist, it may be equally true that he may be eternally good, and yet sin and suffering eternally remain.

Friends, as another has shown, this is the argument of the atheist. He says: "You believe in a God infinitely good! Look at that volcano pouring out ruin upon Herculaneum and Pompeii; look at that earthquake engulphing thousands, and swallowing down its capacious throat the villages of the plain; look at the devastating wars, ravaging fires, and sweeping floods, all under the providence of God: and yet you call him good! Rather let us conclude that there is no God!"

One vastly more respects an atheist who makes this argument, than the professed disciple of Christ who adduces present sin and suffering as a justification of the doctrine of eternal sin and suffering: the one reasons against the character of God, and abides the conclusion; the other reasons to the

same end, in like manner, and refuses the conclusion.

But let us look at the problem for a moment. Everybody sees that everlasting sin and suffering (the fate of the whole universe having been already determined) can secure no good. No resulting benefit solicits our favorable judgment. No sweetening element, no single drop in that bitter cup, makes it in any degree palatable, or in any measure cooling to our parched lips. It is "evil and only evil, and that continually." It aims at no good. The condition of all is fixed. The saved in heaven are permanent in character and blessedness; the damned in hell are equally permanent in character and sinfulness. No good can come to them in any direction whatever. Such results stand for ever arrayed against the divine goodness and purpose. They may be unavoidably submitted to of God; never welcomed. God may still be good, but undeniably weak; that is, no longer God. If sin and suffering are limited in duration, a very different result will follow. The question, then, that naturally presses upon our thought is, Can sin and its consequences be overruled for good?

Nay; who does not know that transgression has been, and therefore clearly ever may be, so overruled? Take that familiar case, the sin of Joseph's brethren, the sons of the old patriarch Jacob. Jealous of their brother Joseph, they sold him into

slavery to be borne away into Egypt; and, with falsehood on their lips, and with a deceitful preparation of Joseph's coat, persuaded the aged patriarch that his darling son had been slain by wild beasts.

The hand of God, however, brought Joseph into Pharaoh's court. God informed him of the coming years of plenty and the succeeding years of famine. Grain was stored in abundance; and, when the famine came, Jacob and his sons, and his sons' sons, came down into Egypt to be unconsciously welcomed and blessed by the brother they had wronged. When he made himself known, and shame and confusion covered them, Joseph said: "You meant it unto evil; God meant it unto good."

This is a key to God's providential dealing with sin; and he who recklessly throws away this key voluntarily bars himself from the temple of faith. On the part of God, this is not the doing of a little wrong as against a great one: it is but employing an instrumentality for good. Man is the wrongdoer; God is the promoter of good. The fact that both deal with the same transaction should not puzzle a philosopher.

Let us turn to a more conspicuous example. Where was there ever presented more pointed and unpardonable sin than in the malice of the Jewish nation crucifying the Son of God? And yet we owe to the manifestation of divine love, which that tragic scene involves, the ultimate salvation of the world. He

who will turn to Revelation (v. 13), will hear the inspired seer in his rapture saying: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!"

What transcendent glory illumines this scene! All the sin of the world, all the redemption by Christ, come up to view. The congregated universe ascribes "blessing, and honor, and glory, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." How dark was the night of crucifixion! How refulgent the day illumined by the Sun of Righteousness! Will not this sin of the Jews, overruled of God, promote the redemption of the world? Without the crucifixion, that song of glory to the Lamb could never have been sung.

There doubtless may be in this problem a depth and mystery that no human wisdom can fully fathom; but we have the key to that mystery, in the Providence that makes all things issue in good. Who does not feel the superiority of such a faith? Who does not feel that to reject this solution, is to leave the mystery for ever unsolved?

When it is conceded that it is possible for God to overrule evil for good, an infinite moral necessity is created that it shall be so overruled. Now the Psalmist says, "Surely the wrath of men shall praise thee:

the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain;" which is but another way of saying, "No evil shall arise that shall not be made to serve thy purposes of grace."

If this result be possible, can any one doubt that it is the best possible? Can any one doubt that infinite wisdom, goodness, and power are committed, by their very infinity, to the best possible result? Let no man say that endless sin and suffering present the best issue possible! No one can say that; the Christian sensibilities of the whole world, both of believers and unbelievers, cry out against it. Reason, therefore, refuses the conclusion. Nor let any one assume that a world entirely free from sin and suffering would have been the best. No man is wise enough to say that. Infinite wisdom has, in the fact, decided otherwise.

Here, then, reverent faith must rest. A world in which the sin and suffering is circumscribed and limited, often made visibly instrumental in the furtherance of good, and, in the providence of God, always capable of being so directed, — is the actual world that God has created, and in which he has placed us. No man can impugn it. When God pronounced it "very good," no man can say that its entire future was not open before him.

With the two hypotheses, therefore, in mind, — namely, limited evil, overruled for good; and endless evil, because endless, impossible to be so overruled, — reason and faith cannot hesitate in the

choice. And when the Christian Church persistently urges the latter, with the weight of mere human authority, with metaphysical, sometimes recondite, and sometimes palpably partisan reasons, it assumes a fearful responsibility touching the wide-spread scepticism it begets. The vindication of the divine goodness on such ground, — and especially on the ground that Almighty God, the Judge of all the earth, will finally sentence howsoever wicked men to the further perpetration of unlimited evil and the endurance of the suffering it brings, without the slightest aim at any good, with a combination of circumstances peremptorily excluding any after good, — I say, the vindication of the divine character on such ground is absolutely impossible.

Suppose I should summon a surgeon to a patient in your presence. Suppose he should employ his skill, not for the good of the patient, not for his restoration to soundness, if in any wise diseased, nor even for the saving of his life, — but simply for his torment and anguish! Suppose he should institute a systematic course of torture, paring the extremities in a way to inflict the most refined and prolonged suffering; beginning with the smallest, treating them one by one; removing skin, muscle, flesh, sinews, tendons, bone, all, — till only a limbless trunk should remain! Suppose the process should be continued upon the trunk itself, adding piece-meal torment as long as the breath of life

could be preserved! — and all, ostensibly, for the exhibition of his skill, wisdom, goodness, and power!

Startling and absurd as the supposition is, I deliberately and reverently declare my profound conviction that such a surgeon, devil though he is, can be vindicated with infinite facility and readiness, compared with such a God as is implied in the proposition under consideration. The one is the barbarism of an hour: the other, of vast eternity! Both are evil; but the one as much transcends the other as infinity transcends the finite!

Thirdly and finally: Having seen that the defenders of modified Orthodoxy have surrendered the specific passages of Scripture on which they formerly relied; and having subjected the modified propositions to a hasty examination, — we have before us a vague defence of the doctrine of endless punishment yet to be confronted. It is this: Whatever may be true of specific passages, the whole "trend" of the Bible is to the doctrine of endless woe.

Well, my friends, there are some things very patent about this proposition. The way Scripture language strikes one depends very much upon circumstances. If you have been reared to conceive of the future life as exclusively the world of retribution; if it has been habitually described to you as more plentifully furnished with furnaces of fire than with the glories of Paradise; if you have been

taught to think that every reference to fire belongs to the next world, — your feelings will be conformed thereto. The Bible will be interpreted spontaneously according to habit. Hence, it is a matter of education, of verbal association, of prejudice, and feeling. Whenever was mentioned fire, or damnation, or hell, it would seem to you that eternity was blazing with these anomalous means of grace.

But had you been otherwise instructed; had you been taught to resolve this rhetoric into plain common sense; had you been nurtured in a simple understanding of the Bible, a quick apprehension of its great moral truths, and a hearty reliance upon its gracious promises, — you would not feel that the trend of the Bible was towards eternal woe.

Moreover, those who say this overlook the fact that there are various matters treated in the Bible besides punishment, the trend of which we might well consider. For example: What is the doctrine of the Bible in respect to the pity, graciousness, and loving-kindness of Almighty God? What, of the self-denial and self-sacrifice of Christ, — tasting death for every man, giving himself a ransom for all mankind? What, touching the mercy of God, many times affirmed to endure for ever (Psalm cxxxvi.)? What, concerning that gospel grace of which it is said, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"? What is the doctrine of the Bible respecting the victory of Christ, — when he shall have

subjected all souls to himself, and shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, "that God may be all in all"?

Trend of the Scriptures, indeed! There are some appetites that relish only the fulminating rhetoric of fire. There are theological iconoclasts who will strike down Jehovah himself, and extinguish the light of his everlasting love, that they may save their darling flames. The quality and wisdom of this sort of Christianity will come before us on another occasion.

Meantime, friends, if any who hear me must lean upon authority, there are enough educated, intelligent doubters of the doctrine of endless punishment who have recently come forth from all the various churches of Christendom, throughout the more civilized countries of the world, to create a reasonable doubt of its truth; and, I submit, if there was ever a case, under the whole heaven, where the doubt should be given to the prisoner at the bar, while at the same time, in the very cherishing of the doubt, you defend the wisdom and goodness of Almighty God, this is that case.

III.

IS THAT A CHRISTIAN TEMPER WHICH EAGERLY SEEKS FOR NEW DEFENCES, WHEN THE OLD HAVE BEEN SWEPT AWAY?

"YE KNOW NOT WHAT MANNER OF SPIRIT YE ARE OF." — *St. Luke* ix. 55.

IN continuing our discussion of the doctrine of Endless Punishment, we invite your attention to-night to the following special topic: —

"Is that a Christian temper which eagerly seeks for new defences, when the old have been swept away?"

Zeal for party often triumphs over zeal for God. Professions of an exclusive desire to honor God and promote the cause of truth are often found coupled with gross misrepresentations of one's neighbor; and out of a partisan spirit not unfrequently springs the spirit of malignant detraction.

James and John, you will remember, — faithless and powerless before the lunatic, — were amazed at the mighty power of God who healed him through Christ. And yet when these same disciples failed

to find accommodations in Samaria for the Master, "because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem," they were anxious to call down fire from God out of heaven, — quoting the example of Elias, which they entirely misinterpreted, — and received the severe rebuke, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

We are also told of certain of the synagogue of the Libertines, and others, who in their great zeal could condescend to suborn men to testify that Stephen had uttered "blasphemous words against Moses and against God," and yet who were ready to stone Stephen to death.

There are many influences which tend to nurture a partisan spirit. The force of education; aversion to change before the world; shrinking from the criticisms which changes incur, and a desire to maintain personal consistency, — these not unfrequently bind men to silence, and hold them as continued props of doctrines, faith in which they have already surrendered. But the chief of these influences is the temper which error begets. Error necessarily breathes its own spirit. It cannot do the work of truth, — precisely that: no more, no less. It colors the mind in which it dwells. All things take on the same hue. If faith be bitter, the heart will be bitter; and bitter fountains cannot send forth sweet waters. This is especially manifest in the religious controversies of all ages.

The bitterness of the Augustinians against the Pelagians, in the early centuries; of the Calvinists against the followers of Servetus, in the later centuries; and of the so-called Evangelical world against the Universalists and Unitarians in our own day, — are marked examples of implacable partisan zeal. Such a temper cannot weigh evidence; nor will it relinquish an error, however thoroughly exploded.

Most unseemly are the labors that spring from this sectarian zeal; and never have been exhibited works more unseemly than are those witnessed in our own day. Doctrines from which our common humanity shrinks, and shrinks all the more palpably the more Christian it is; defended by arguments hoary with the moss of centuries, but exploded by the best scholars in every successive age; holding their way on to our own time, when the enlightenment of the Church can bear them no longer, and scholars on both sides of the Atlantic, and from every sect on the face of the earth, have confessed the insufficiency of their proofs, — are surrendered, sometimes only partially, warily, evasively; sometimes openly, frankly, gladly, and with gratitude to God.

At the same time, there are others who, — themselves practically conceding the levelling of the old forts, — with an industry worthy of a better cause, seek for new defences of those doctrines; resorting, not only to misrepresentations as to the position of others, but to adroit statements touching their own.

The honest and earnest examination of supposed proofs of a doctrine so terrible as that of endless punishment, is a worthy and noble labor; but when, after such examination, those proofs are practically confessed invalid, and one after another of them, as we have shown on previous occasions, has been surrendered, until all the leading ones are gone, — to still continue eagerly searching here and there, on the right hand and on the left, ransacking heaven and earth, to find some new, though it be but abstruse, consideration that may suggest a seeming probability (and at most only a probability) of the truth of the doctrine, is an unseemly work.

When I have arraigned my neighbor on some grave charge, and all the evidence I had to lean on to sustain that charge has been clearly taken from my hands in a court of justice, — what sort of a man am I, to go scouring the neighborhood, up and down, to find some additional rumor or scandal to make good the libel against him? Not a little of that sort of work is being done to-day in defence of the doctrine of endless punishment.

First of all is the palpable misrepresentation of Universalism. Not yet given over is the charge that Universalism makes "death to be the savior of men." Our distinguished and boasted "scientific" lecturer, in a neighboring hall, tells you that Universalism formerly regarded "death as a bath that washed out all corruption." And yet Mr. Ballou, the elder, to

whom is commonly assigned the honor of being the father of that abomination, says, in a hymn well known and often used, and found in both collections here before you, revealing how grossly he is maligned by the imputation, —

> "In God's eternity
> There shall a day arise,
> When all the race of man shall be
> With Jesus in the skies.
> As night before the rays
> Of morning flees away,
> Sin shall retire before the blaze
> Of God's eternal day."[1]

Surely that is not salvation by death! And this charge is made after our lecturer had been informed, by the united voice of our ministry in the neighborhood, that such a doctrine is "alike repudiated by all," — a declaration he is pleased to consider as limited to "all of us to-day."

Again, he would tell us that so marked were the differences of opinion, half a century ago, between the Universalists and Restorationists, that the former withdrew from the latter. This statement is made to show that Universalists have to-day practically become Restorationists, because tolerating them as it is alleged they formerly would not. His statement is exactly the reverse of the truth. The feeling demanding separation was not cherished on the

[1] Church Harmonies, hymn 386.

part of Universalists. A few of the Restorationists, — less than a score, I think, in number, — more than half a century ago, did withdraw from the general body of Universalists, and establish a separate, if not rival, association; but in a short time they were lost to the Church, to themselves, and to the world, as their organization soon fell to pieces.

Universalism, from the beginning until now, has been simply and solely the doctrine of the ultimate gathering of all souls in purity unto God. Those who surrender the doctrine of endless punishment and do not accept the doctrine of annihilation, are of necessity Universalists. Whether, in refusing to confess it, any of these are "crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh," and still "putting him to an open shame" (Heb. vi. 6), I leave the candid hearer to judge.

Equally adroit is our lecturer in presenting his own position touching the current Orthodoxy of the time. He alleges that Orthodoxy is maligned, or, as he expresses it, "misrepresented, in the roughest and rankest manner, by the declaration that infants are lost;" while, at the same time, he himself has not repudiated the usual doctrines of the fall of Adam, original sin, and total depravity. Is it quite clear that infants, totally depraved, "striking against the infinite bosses of God's buckler," — whatever that gracious armorial figure may mean, — "will not glance downward"?

They are again misrepresented, he tells us, by the imputation of the doctrine of literal fire and brimstone. He himself ostensibly repudiates what he is pleased to call the "Dantean doctrines of fire;" and then proceeds to assert that the spirit may take on a spiritual body, into which all pains and pangs may strike their roots, and possibly present something as near like unto fire as these spiritual bodies are like unto physical. Very likely; but how near, pray, is that?

If he attempts to prop the falling theory of endless punishment by authority of the poets, he is equally unfortunate. Mr. Whittier, it is well known, in his poem entitled "The Eternal Goodness," says:

> "Not mine to look where cherubim
> And seraphs cannot see;
> But nothing can be good in him,
> Which evil is in me."

Again: —

> "I know not what the future hath
> Of marvel or surprise,
> Assured alone that life and death
> His mercy underlies."

And again: —

> "I know not where his islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air,
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond his love and care."

To rebut this, and to show that the poet, in a riper conviction, had a year later surrendered this

hope, the Tremont Temple lecturer quotes, among other stanzas, the following hypothesis, as though it were a matured judgment: —

> "For ever round the mercy seat,
> The guiding lights of love shall burn;
> But what if, habit bound, thy feet
> Shall lack the will to turn?
> What if thine eye refuse to see,
> Thine ear of heaven's free welcome fail,
> And thou a willing captive be,
> Thyself thy own dark jail?"

And yet the lecturer omits the closing stanza, in which Whittier rebukes doubt of the unforsaking love of God: —

> "To doubt the love that fain would break
> The fetters from thy self-bound limb,
> And dream that God can thee forsake
> As thou forsakest him."

Of about the same date, and still clearer in its hope, is his poem on "The Divine Compassion." He asks, —

> "While sin remains, and souls in darkness,
> Can heaven itself be heaven, and look unmoved on hell?"

To this he answers, —

> "Then through the Gates of Pain, I dream,
> A wind of heaven blows coolly in;
> Fainter the awful discords seem,
> The smoke of torment grows more thin.
> Tears quench the burning soil, and thence
> Spring sweet pale flowers of penitence;
> And through the dreary realm of man's despair,
> Star-crowned an angel walks, and lo! God's hope is there!

"Is it a dream? Is heaven so high
That pity cannot breathe its air?
Its happy eyes for ever dry,
Its holy lips without a prayer?
My God! My God! If thither led
By thy free grace unmerited,
No crown nor palm be mine, but let me keep
A heart that still can feel, and eyes that still can weep."

And even in his poem, entitled "The Cry of a Lost Soul," Whittier makes his hope to shine in the closing stanza: —

"'Father of all!' he urges his strong plea,
'Thou lovest all: thy erring child may be
Lost to himself, but never lost to thee!'"

. . . . . .

"'Wilt thou not make, eternal source and goal!
In thy long years, life's broken circle whole,
And change to praise the cry of a lost soul?'"

Such is the author whom our lecturer would force to be a prop in the falling temple of endless woe!

When he is confronted with the passage, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," he feels the force of it, and thinks to parry its effect by saying that it cannot be fulfilled until after the general judgment; because then the separation will be made. Let it be so; it is true that all shall be made alive in Christ notwithstanding.

But where is his evidence of a "general," meaning universal, judgment, that shall literally separate one class of mankind from another, — a doctrine, in this form and shape, very generally surrendered? It

comes from a misinterpretation and misapplication of Matt. xxv. 31–46, the fulfilment of which, as shown on a former occasion, is limited, in Matt. xxiv. 34, to that generation, — a parallel to which may be found in Matt. xvi. 27, 28; and there, again, limited to the lifetime of some who heard the Saviour speak.

He deals also with the words "everlasting" and "eternal," and is compelled, as a scholar, to concede their ambiguity; and yet, leaning on the assumption that punishment is as enduring as life, he deduces the endlessness of punishment from the application thereto of the term "everlasting," which he would not at all need, were his assumption well founded.

Again, he tells us "there are six universals in the Bible, which many have mistaken for a seventh, namely, universal salvation." His six universals which are in the Bible, while the seventh is not, are "the universal atonement, the universal benevolence of God, the universal providential care of God, the universal prevalence of the gospel, the universal resurrection, and the universal reign of Christ." Let us examine these several universals.

"Universal atonement" — what means it? That is a question for exposition. The Bible sense of the term "atonement" is "at-one-ment," — the word being used but once in the Bible (Rom. v. 11), in which case we are said to have received it. Universal

atonement, therefore, is universal "at-one-ment,"—equivalent to universal salvation.

Again, the old Calvinistic doctrine of the atonement was, that Christ died to save all the elect, and that he would certainly save all for whom he died. That doctrine has been modified by Arminianism, in which the Calvinism of to-day concurs, to the effect that Christ "died for all men." Accept the modern doctrine of universal atonement, which our lecturer gives us, and join it to his own Calvinism, as respects its efficacy, and we have Christ dying for all men, and assuredly saving all for whom he dies. Thus the Calvinistic atonement, with the Arminian annex, gives us again universal salvation.

Nor is the fact of "the universal benevolence of God" less pregnant with hope. Has our lecturer considered what the word "benevolence" means? Benevolence is well-wishing; a disposition to do good. Universal benevolence, a disposition to do good to all,—to every creature God has made. But if an infinite Being wishes well to every creature, what can prevent his wishes from flowering forth into deeds? Thus universal benevolence becomes universal beneficence,—universal well-wishing, universal well-doing. Or (which is the same thing), the infinite disposition of God to do good to every creature cannot be barred from doing the good: which, again, is universal salvation, and places that doctrine in the Bible, on the lecturer's own premise.

We have thus involved beforehand the third "universal," — "the universal providential care of God." Journey the wide world over, and there is not a single lonely soul in heaven or on earth that is not held in the palm of the Almighty's hand, and that is not the object of his infinite and universal care. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. x. 29, 30). Who will not be content with such a Providence? Who can fear neglect? Who, leaning on such care, cannot bear any divinely-appointed sorrow? All worlds are one: all places heaven. Here, or elsewhere, we are the children of the Father, and cannot distrust his love. The truth is, the inspired meaning has dropped out of the sacred words. We have heard these beneficent phrases so long associated with doctrines that nullify them, that we do not know what is in the Bible, nor the full salvation embraced in the Father's universal care. But let us go on.

"The universal prevalence of the gospel." Our lecturer is right. The promise of this is in the Bible. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord;' for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxxi. 34). "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"

(Isa. xi. 9). "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John xii. 32). "The isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. xlii. 4). Think of this. The gospel prevails where it takes effect; where it is believed and obeyed. The universal prevalence of the gospel is universal belief in and obedience to the gospel; and that is universal salvation.

Again, "the universal resurrection." Right here, also. "Now, that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Luke xx. 37). The apostle hoped for the resurrection of the dead, "both of the just and the unjust" (Acts xxiv. 15). Now, call to mind the resurrection state, as described by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. and 2 Cor. v.): immortal, incorruptible, spiritual, in the image of the heavenly, with the sting of death (sin) destroyed, and victory over death finally achieved; death itself having been swallowed up in victory. "So, when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible shall have put on incorruption;" when victory over death is achieved, and the sting of death destroyed, — then will have transpired a universal resurrection which involves universal salvation.

Or, finally; "The universal reign of Christ." What is it for Christ to reign in any soul? It is that his truth shall have taken effect in that soul; it is

that he shall have established his throne therein; it is that that soul shall have yielded willing obedience to Christ, and voluntarily become his servant. The universal reign of Christ, therefore, is the universal dominion of Christ in human hearts, by the power of his truth. He must reign till he shall have accomplished this, — till he shall have "subdued all things unto himself." Then "shall he deliver up the kingdom to the Father," that "God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 25–28). This, again, is universal salvation.

Instead, therefore, of these six "universals" being in the Bible, with universal salvation excluded, — resting on these alone, universal salvation is six times emphatically involved, being embraced in every one of them.

Dissatisfied, apparently, with the progress he had thus made, our lecturer flies to the expedient of a decision by majorities; telling us that the question between universal salvation and endless punishment has been tried in the high court of public opinion, in many successive ages, and decided for endless punishment. Bnt he did not tell us that during several of the early centuries the decision was for Universalism; nor did he tell us that the most intelligent judges in all these later ages dissented at every trial from the common verdict. Least of all did he tell us that a majority can settle nothing in abstract principles, or in those high things about which the

multitude know little. If we settle questions by the majority, what shall we say of the Copernican system of Astronomy? If it is decided by the majority, shall we not re-establish the doctrine of a local hell? If we decide questions by majorities, who will to-day deny the truth of the doctrine of literal fire and brimstone? Not only does the heathen world, which makes the majority of all races, believe it, but large portions also of the Catholic and Greek Churches, which make a majority of Christendom, believe it. Besides, a multitude of Protestants have not yet "gotten out of those woods." They are where the lecturer himself intimates that so many others are — "in Dantean fires." "Let no man," says he, "whistle on this theme until he is out of the Dantean forest."

In all these reasonings of our distinguished lecturer, we continually find betrayals of his sense of the inconclusiveness of his arguments. I therefore again submit, that in every court of justice where there is a reasonable doubt in respect to law or evidence, the benefit of that doubt should be given to the prisoner at the bar; especially when, at the same time, it best defends the honor of the judge.

But do you not perceive that these remarks of our lecturer are only a playing around the subject; and that, when he comes at length to ground his argument, he rests on the assumption of the final permanence of evil character? He thinks he has sometimes seen

that permanence attained even in this world; and, though occasional recoveries from among the worst of men are witnessed, he is disposed to regard them as "exceptions which confirm the rule." Why should he not rather regard them as the "first-fruits" of an abundant harvest? These are recovered by the feeble appeals of men: are not the persuasives of God greater? If by these means only a few sheaves are gathered, may we not expect at length to glean the entire field? He guesses that character becomes permanent in some instances only in this world; but dogmatically assumes that it will become permanent in all instances in the world to come, — as though the energies of Almighty God were to be employed in perpetuating evil, rather than in promoting the moral enlightenment and recovery of the world!

I have already called your attention to the instance of the disciples, faithless and powerless, who could not heal the lunatic, and were amazed at the mighty power of God by which Christ healed him. It is reserved for many a soul, looking upon the leprosy and lunacy of sin, to be still more greatly amazed at the mighty power of God, when Christ shall have cleansed and restored them. The ancient promise holds good: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah i. 18).

The temper of mind and heart so widely mani-

fested in eagerly doubting the power and grace of God, is not the temper of the patient and forgiving Christ. Go, listen to the low-breathed prayer of the devout Christian mother as she bends over the cold remains of a wayward son, suddenly stricken down. Conceive her, in the midst of the crowd in Tremont Temple, listening to the lecturer emphasizing the assumption of the final impenitence of those who die in sin, and the permanence of their unutterable anguish; and imagine her swinging her handkerchief and joining in the rapturous applause! The very suggestion is scarcely less than blasphemy against a mother's love.

The Saviour so loved the world that he gave himself for it. "For a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 7, 8). "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. viii. 9). "Every one that loveth is born of God" (1 John iv. 7); and love, — that is to say, charity, — as St. Paul tells us, "believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth" (1 Cor. xiii). Every truly Christian heart "rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. i. 8), when the supposed evidences of the doctrine of endless punishment are found to be invalid; but the modern disciples of Orthodoxy clothe themselves in sackcloth. Their countenances, apparently, kindle with

delight, and their joy bursts forth in loudest applause, only when the thunderings of the orator quicken their confidence in the perpetual thunderings of infinite wrath! I do neither the orator nor the audience any injustice. Having satisfied both himself and them that the doctrine in question is true, and ought to be true, he adds: "I am glad that what ought to be is;" and they applauded the remark.[1] Are we returning to the days when the saints in heaven were represented as looking with satisfaction upon the woes of the lost?

Contrast these exhibitions with the temper of Christ himself. Look upon that wondrous grave of Lazarus! See the bereaved sisters, Mary and Martha, bowed down in lamentation, their eyes brimming with tears! The Lord had been summoned. There he stands weeping with them, notwithstanding he is about to restore the sleeping brother to their loving embrace. But Tremont Temple resounds with applause at the supposed proofs that the damned in hell, however loved by saintly hosts, are never to be restored! Jesus laments over Jerusalem, warning its inhabitants that their house should be left unto them desolate; that they should not see him henceforth until they should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 39). But some of the modern followers of Christ rejoice at the supposed

[1] The "Boston Daily Advertiser," March 22, 1878.

indications that millions of sinners will never be brought to say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"! "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 10). There is applause in Tremont Temple at every supposed proof that millions of sinners never will repent!

Christian, forsooth! Why, this temper does not rise to the level of respectable heathenism! Zoroaster says: "To be insensible to the sufferings of our fellow-creatures is the most dangerous of diseases." Is that disease afflicting the Tremont Temple crowd? Let us hope that they will not furnish an example of "permanence in evil." Let us hope that, at some time, they will come to know "what manner of spirit they are of."

It may be, friends, that the most easily-besetting sin of that people, as of many another people, consists in thinking that others are so much worse than themselves that God, with all the riches of his grace, cannot save them. I have desired simply to draw aside that veil, and let you observe what is the temper that rules in this court, in the re-trial of the cause, — Endless Punishment *versus* Universal Salvation. For myself, I prefer to believe somewhat more in God, though it should necessitate that I believe somewhat less in the devil.

Great and astonishing as is this zeal for a bad cause, it is not — thank God! — an invincible zeal.

Multitudes have had their eyes opened to the light; multitudes more are finding a quiet and private comfort in the growing hopes begotten in their souls. There was a time when the disciples of our Lord were weak and powerless; and when he was arrested and tried as a malefactor, they were "scattered, every man to his own." But when the mighty power of God had been so gloriously manifested in the raising of Jesus Christ our Lord from the dead, those same disciples became suddenly strong, able to endure great sacrifices, and many of them yielded their lives in defence of the gospel.

Let us, my friends, seek to recognize and cherish the spirit that made the disciples thus morally vigorous. The world has its pitfalls; the way of the transgressor is hard; there are obstacles to his progress in that way; there are storms beating upon the head of him who is careless of his aims in life. But God does not abandon him. He made him for Himself. He waits his recovery. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. iv. 11).

God's methods are well chosen. His plans have no elements of weakness. His agencies are fitted to their work. When he appoints an instrumentality for the salvation of men, that instrumentality will assuredly succeed. God does not hurry his work. You plant your seed in the spring-time, and do not

expect to reap until the harvest. Many an enterprise waits years for the maturing of its promise and its ultimate fulfilment. In like manner, many a soul born in ignorance lives long years in that ignorance, and afterwards comes into the light. Who shall say that the multitudes, now in the darkness and oppression of error, are excluded from the providential care of Almighty God? Who shall say that they will never come into the light of his presence; that the Sun of Righteousness will never illumine the world; that the work of redemption will never be complete; that Christ will never "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;" that the understandings of men will never be penetrated by divine truth, nor the souls of men filled with love to their Father and their God? Let those think thus who will; but let us cherish the great hopes of the gospel of grace. Let us remember that the more we love, the more we can believe; and the less we love, the more we shall doubt. Let us remember that the greatest error the church can commit, is so to interpret the Scriptures and the government of God as to turn the heart of the world from the Lord God who made us.

IV.

IF MORAL IN ITS INFLUENCE, WHY WAS IT REJECTED OF GOD, AS A MOTIVE TO OBEDIENCE, FOR AT LEAST FOUR THOUSAND YEARS?

"I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, THAT YE PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE."—*Romans* xii. 1.

IN the three preceding lectures we have considered, first, the very wide rejection of all the prominent and long-credited grounds of the doctrine of Endless Punishment. By many the doctrine itself has also been rejected; while others, who still adhere to it, place it on new grounds so utterly irreconcilable with the old foundations as to amount to a logical removal of them. Secondly, we have endeavored to show that the new grounds on which Orthodoxy is made to rest by its present defenders cannot be maintained; and, thirdly, that the temper of mind which, finding the old proofs of the doctrine taken away, eagerly seeks for new, is not only not a Christian temper,

but does not rise even to the level of respectable heathenism, as tested by the ethics of Zoroaster himself.

To-night, we ask your attention to the topic: "If the doctrine of endless punishment be true, and if its influence is moral, why was it rejected of God, as a motive to obedience, for at least four thousand years?"

First, you will expect me to consider the fact which makes the premise of this query. In raising the question whether the Old Testament, covering a period of nearly four thousand years, does or does not teach the doctrine of endless punishment, you will naturally look for evidence to those eras and crises in history, and to the enunciation of law and the execution of judgments, with which that period abounds.

First of all, there rise up before us the great progenitors of our race. God, having created Adam and Eve, and placed them in the Garden, gives them certain permissions and lays upon them certain prohibitions, — enforcing the latter by a very distinct enunciation of penalty: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17). Now remember, friends, that our first parents were looking out upon the world totally inexperienced. Remember that they had not observed, in all probability, even a single instance of animal mortality, much less had they dreamed of their own death. There had been

no revelation whatever made to them in respect to a future life. They cannot be supposed to have entertained even the slightest notion, at this early stage of their experience, touching the subject of immortality. In all probability that question had not arisen in their minds. They were children in thought, and knowledge, and observation; and before them was placed a certain prohibition, with the declaration that in the day that they shall transgress that prohibition, they "shall surely die."

Now, it is scarcely too much to say that they could not have known, at first blush, what the term "die" meant at all; but, when the day of their transgression had gone by, they would quite well know it did not mean the extinguishment of physical life. And besides, as whatever it does mean was to be experienced in the day in which they should transgress, they would be turned back upon themselves to consider what had befallen them; and would become aware of their lost innocence, and of that self-condemnation and darkness of spirit which their transgression had brought upon them. To a fuller sense of this moral desolation their expulsion from the garden would probably awaken them. I submit that in all reason they could not go beyond this, as in reason we cannot for a moment suppose the Father intimated any thing else than this. Least of all can it be assumed that God wrapped up in that one word "die," not only moral condemnation, but physical

death, and infinite woe beyond the grave, as the theology of the world has so long asserted.

Well, the first pair did not long remain alone. Children were born unto them; and these children fell out by the way. Cain slew Abel: a foul deed, — the primal murder among all the creatures of God! And yet, how little may Cain have known of the enormity of that crime! However this may be, you will agree with me that it was a truly fitting occasion on which the most sharply-barbed arrows in the quiver of God's wrath should be displayed before him; when eternal woe, if in store, should be distinctly announced. Nothing of the kind transpired. Matters were left to take their natural course. Consider now how society, unformed, unorganized, moved upon by the spirit of self-protection and mutual good-will, would be likely to treat such a culprit! There were no prisons; the merciful gallows had not been dreamed of. It would seem that all about him simply joined hands, and, through the suggestions it may be of the Divine spirit, drove him out, a wanderer, a vagabond, upon the face of the earth; and Cain cries out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" (Gen. iv. 13.) Does God give him any intimation that this is only the prelude to immortal woes beyond the veil? Contrariwise, not only utterly silent is he in regard to that transcendent fact, — if fact it be, — but he puts a mark upon Cain, lest anybody meeting him may destroy him from the face of the earth.

Now, these are two most important crises in the very establishment of the Divine government of the race; and they are without any pretence of the slightest hint of the doctrine of interminable woe, or any woe, beyond the grave, for the sins of this or of any other life. Remember, it was the very infancy of the race; there was an absence of all experience; there was no background of history, — no lessons garnered from Divine Providence through a long period of observation. Remember, they were human souls, with all the interests of human souls at stake, treading an untried path, dealing with the profoundest facts and principles, with little to guide them; the very language in which they were addressed being, probably, but imperfectly understood.

Is it a marvel that the world grew wicked; that the solicitations of appetite and passion, in the absence of any habitual restraints, should have more and more demoralized the children of men? Is it a marvel that, after fifteen centuries had elapsed, the world was found almost utterly corrupt, — so corrupt that God (speaking after the manner of men) said, "It repenteth me that I have made man"? (Gen. vi. 6, 7.) Warning Noah of the approaching catastrophe, and warning the multitudes on every hand, he caused the ark to be prepared; and Noah and his family entered into it. Then the windows of heaven were opened; the torrents of rain descended; and the world of mankind were swept from

the face of the earth! Not the faintest intimation, however, that water was to be followed by fire! Not the faintest intimation that they were swept from this scene of wickedness and corruption into a world of everlasting sin and suffering! Silent as the grave concerning any woes that should come after! They were warned ever and anon to turn from their wickedness; were exhorted to repent and submit to God: and yet, though deaf to entreaty, the veil is not lifted; they are shown no woe from beyond the grave! As the curtain hung, so it remains; and the wicked world is swept away.

In great mercy, undoubtedly, to the whole family of man was this sweeping judgment executed. It emphasized, as nothing else could, God's displeasure at sin, and left a lesson that could not be lost on the ages that should follow.

Five or six hundred years more roll on. The world did not again become so corrupt. It does not appear that there has ever been an age when the world has been as corrupt as it was in Noah's time. Yet certain cities, which have been copied by other cities in later ages, fell through luxury into debaucheries, self-indulgence, and licentiousness, and became as obnoxious to the righteous government of God as was the antediluvian world. God again poured out his judgments: this time in consuming fire. Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain, were now blotted from the face of the earth. Never

an intimation, however, that these fires were to be continued! Not a hint that this destruction was not the entirety of the divine judgment upon them. The Apostle Jude speaks of them, in this very judgment, as "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude, verse 7). It is undeniable that reference is had solely to the fire that destroyed them from the earth, because it is "set forth for an example." But whatever interpretation may be given to this language of Jude, it cannot affect the point before us, — namely, the original judgment does not go one step beyond death. The matter is left there; the cities are devastated; and all beyond remains veiled as before. How can we, for a single moment, suppose that during all this time there were in store judgments of eternal vengeance in the unseen world, to which these sinners by wholesale were sent: and yet no hint of it to all these inexperienced multitudes?

In the mean time, Abraham had been called. He had moved up to Canaan and there settled. Children were born to him; and the promise of universal blessing originally made to him was repeated to his son Isaac, and to his grandson Jacob; and after two hundred and fifteen years Jacob and his family — in all seventy souls — went down into Egypt. Preceded by Joseph, who through the sin of his brethren had been sold to Egyptian merchants, and had risen to high place in Pharaoh's court, they heard of the

plenty he had stored, and fled thither to escape the terrible consequences of a famine prevailing in Canaan. In honor for a time, they became subjected at length to thraldom, — to as dire a condition of slavery as the world has ever known: which they endured for a considerable portion of two hundred and fifteen years more. At the end of that period had matured the purpose for their deliverance.

I need not rehearse to you the wondrous methods by which God, the Father of us all, made Moses his willing servant, and afterward persuaded Pharaoh and his hosts to let the Israelites go. It is sufficient for us to notice that at no time during those wonderful providences did God say to Pharaoh, "Let these my children go, or I shall despatch you to the realms of unending punishment!" Not a hint of all that! There are various plagues, — dust become lice; frogs through all the house, even in bed and in kneading-trough; swarms of flies; boils and blains; the plague of hail, of locusts, and of darkness; murrain among the cattle; and the destruction of the first-born among the Egyptian families (Ex. viii., ix., x., xi.), — but not a hint is there of any thing beyond the grave. When Pharaoh consented to let them go, and repenting pursued them with his hosts who were swallowed up in the sea, not by a single breath did God indicate that they were swallowed up to woes eternal! An utter silence on all beyond what was visible to them is maintained.

A little later Moses comes to Sinai. He stands face to face with Jehovah. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. . . . And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the Mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the Mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole Mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the Mount; and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the Mount; and Moses went up" (Ex. xix. 10–20).

Such were the startling and almost tragic circumstances under which transpired the most important event in all the ante-Christian times, — namely, the giving of the Moral Law, or the Ten Commandments. This law has ever since been the foundation of the

ethics of the world. It was not abrogated, but on the contrary confirmed, by Christ himself. It may surprise us to observe that at this most solemn moment in the history of the race no sanction whatever, drawn from the invisible world, was invoked. Not only was there, in this immediate connection, no appeal to future and invisible woes as a penalty for the breaking of this law, but there was absolutely no penalty save what was involved in the nature of man himself. It would seem that, for the sweep of the ages, God relied upon a loftiness of motive to which the interpretation of Christian ethics has rarely attained: such as the Commandments themselves present, — recognizing the fact that obedience to a moral principle, proceeding from any other motive than the principle itself, is disobedience.

It was otherwise, however, with the specific prohibitions connected with this law as they were blended with the ceremonial code. The rites and commands therein enjoined, though often involving no moral principle, were enforced by various sanctions, — sometimes even death itself. While these penalties uniformly referred to outward and visible transgressions, they would undoubtedly promote ceremonial obedience, — naturally nurturing a habit of obedience which is but a step removed from obedience to principle. Thus is the law a schoolmaster bringing us to Christ. But severe as these penalties often were (speaking after the manner of men), they were len-

iency itself compared with the supposed revelations of the gospel time.

If you follow individual fortunes, you find the same result. Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips, and was not suffered to enter the promised land. David, a great sinner in his treatment of Uriah, was nevertheless, — though prevented from building the temple, the material for which he had gathered, — permitted at length to "sleep with his fathers." Boastful Goliath was laid low by the shepherd boy's sling. Rebellious Absalom came to an untimely end. Sin is everywhere avenged; but death is the utmost judgment at any time inflicted.

The government of God over his chosen people while they remained a united nation, and subsequently while they were maintaining two rival States, was a government of temporal rewards and punishments. When they obeyed the commands of God, they were successful in their conflicts with the heathen nations about them; when they were disobedient to the divine behests, they were defeated; and when at various times, in their deep forgetfulness of God, they wandered far from him, they were given over to captivity to those same heathen powers. But never in all these vicissitudes were there other than temporal judgments thus announced and executed upon them. They seem never to have dreamed that inspiration was pregnant with any future woes.

Thus, whichever way we look, friends, we find a

uniformity of the Divine government in this respect which seems to show that on temporal rewards and punishments did God exclusively rely throughout the whole period preceding the revelation of Christianity. In the light of facts like these, — and you will observe we have not thus far been dealing at all with theories, — we cannot but be cautious in our interpretation of whatever phraseology of the old Scriptures drops into seeming harmony with the severities of modern thought. And we must not forget that we do not read these Scriptures in the language in which they were written, but in a translation made, I grant you, by honest men, but by men who had come to believe in ghosts and devils and demoniacal spirits, and in endless woe itself as the crowning act of the Divine government. That these convictions or prejudices should have influenced their interpretation of Scripture, cannot be thought at all wonderful, nor be for a moment doubted.

Whenever we read in the Old Testament of "hell" in a great variety of connections, we are not to accept the word, as a matter of course, as meaning what it has been long employed to mean among Christians; but, on the other hand, we are carefully to scrutinize its use in all its varied connections, and conclude what is its radical and specific and general meaning. The original from which this word is translated, I need not say, occurs in the Old Testament sixty-four times. In just half of those in-

stances it is translated by the word "hell;" in the other half it is translated twenty-nine times by the word "grave," and three times by the word "pit." Aside from the fact that it is used metaphorically in various instances, there is not the slightest reason, in any one of the sixty-four cases, why the same English word should not have been used in the translation.

It would appear that the translators, unconsciously perhaps, acted upon this rule: Whenever the entire passage did not cut them off from such translation, — as, for instance, when it would send a patriarch like Jacob to hell, or prove the destruction of that favorite place, — they used the word "hell," in the rendering of the Hebrew "sheol," instead of the word "grave," or the phrase, "the unseen state of the dead." So we read, as specimens of these Scriptures (Deut. xxii. 32), "For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell" (sheol). In Psalm ix. 17, it is said: "The wicked shall be turned into hell [sheol], with all the nations that forget God."

We are accustomed to the cavil on this passage that it cannot here mean the grave, for turning the wicked into the grave is only to send them where the righteous go: and yet *we* have a way of sending murderers prematurely to the grave, and deem it a punishment. It is not a question whether wicked men or righteous men are mortal, but whether pre-

mature destruction is a penalty. In harmony with this thought is the original promise: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the earth which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex. xx. 12). Again, in Psalm v. 5, speaking of the impure woman, it is said: "Her steps take hold on hell" (sheol). In Proverbs xxvii. 20, we are told: "Hell [sheol] and destruction are never full."

In all these and like cases where the word is rendered "hell," learned commentators of all schools tell us that it means the "underworld," or "state of the dead," without any discrimination as to their goodness or badness.

By turning now to the Scriptures in which that same word is rendered "grave," you will find that it would often be quite impracticable to render it "hell." Thus, in Genesis xxxviii. 35, Jacob says: "I will go down into the grave [sheol] unto my son mourning." It would not have been deemed respectful to send the old patriarch to "hell unto his son mourning." In 1 Samuel ii. 6, we read: "The Lord . . . bringeth down to the grave [sheol], and bringeth up." It would not have been compatible with the prejudices of the translators to bring men up out of hell; they were only anxious, apparently, to get them safely into hell. In Psalm xxx. 3, it is said: "O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave [sheol]; thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit" (sheol). You

see clearly why the word "hell" is not here used in the translation.

Where it is rendered "pit," we have these forms of expression: Numbers xxi. 30, "And they shall go down quick into the pit" (sheol). Again, Numbers xvi. 33, "And all that pertained to them went down alive into the pit" (sheol). Scriptures like these, I repeat, must be interpreted in the light of the general history of God's dealings with his people, and can by no means be construed as bearing the significance of the word "hell" in its current use among Christians.

When David says, "The pains of hell [sheol] gat hold upon me;" "Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell" (sheol), — he but symbolically describes the severe woes to which he felt himself reduced.

In view of these principles and facts, various authorities have given their most decided and unqualified opinion that the Old Testament is utterly silent with regard to the state of the dead. Dr. Edward Beecher, still a believer in endless punishment, — which he conceives to be taught in the New Testament, though through a peculiar interpretation of his own, — says: —

"The only form of retribution prominently presented in the Old Testament as existing for four thousand years, was temporal, and did not refer to the spirit-world and a future state."

Again he says: "But certainly temporal retributions must have been, in the judgment of God, an element of great power, and well worthy of attentive consideration, or he would not have mainly derived the motives of his revealed government from them for four thousand years."

Yet again he says: "In the law of Moses, taken as a law, a rule of life, individual and national, *there is not one motive* derived from a future state and its retributions. All is derived from this world and the present life. The same also is true of the patriarchal dispensation, and of the world before the Flood."[1]

The Mosaic and patriarchal dispensations, and the world before the Flood, cover the entire period to the end of the Old Testament canon.

Jahn, in his "Biblical Archæology," — a department of learning in which he is without a peer, — testifies to the same effect: "We have not authority, therefore, decidedly to say that any other motives were held out to the ancient Hebrews to pursue the good and to avoid the evil, than those which were derived from the rewards and punishments of this life."

To these we add the testimony of Dr. George Campbell, Principal of a college in Aberdeen, in his sixth "Preliminary Dissertation," already quoted in a former lecture: "It is plain that, in the Old Testa-

[1] Doctrine of Scriptural Retribution, p. 4.

ment, the most profound silence is observed in regard to the state of the deceased, their joys or sorrows, happiness or misery."

These testimonials are valuable as coming from scholars who believe that the New Testament teaches the doctrine of endless punishment. Several canons and members of the clergy of the English Church, — among them Charles Kingsley, and lately Dr. Farrar, with a host of others, — might be added, who deny that the doctrine is contained in either Testament.

To the same effect is the testimony of the Jewish Rabbis. Dr. Wise, of Cincinnati, says: "That the ancient Hebrews had no knowledge of hell is evident from the fact that their language has no term for it. When they in after times began to believe in a similar place, they were obliged to borrow the word *Gehinnom*, 'the valley of Hinnom,' a place outside of Jerusalem, which was the receptacle of the refuse of the city, — a locality which by its offensive smell and sickening miasma was shunned, until vulgar superstition surrounded it with hobgoblins. Haunted places of that kind are not rare in the vicinity of populous cities. In the *Mishnah* of the latest origin, the word *Gehinnom* is used as a locality of punishment for evil-doers, and hence had been so used at no time before the third century A.D."[1]

Dr. Lilienthal, — another learned Rabbi of Cincin-

[1] Universalist Quarterly, April, 1878, p. 239.

nati, — in a sermon on "Judaism and Hell," makes a distinction between the Talmudical and Biblical hell and endless punishment, emphatically repudiating the last as a doctrine of the Jewish Church.[1]

Here then, my friends, we stand; and let us survey, for a moment, the position. Four thousand years have gone by. The law has been given, and commands have been issued, with penalties annexed for their violation; and not in a single instance is there an indication of any sort whatever that any other punishment awaited the transgressor than that which is explicitly announced, which is uniformly temporal.

This being true, is it possible that the doctrine of endless punishment can have been revealed in the New Testament? Do not leave me to answer the probabilities of that question. With utter silence in the beginnings of government, the giving of the law, the administration of affairs, and the execution of God's judgments for four thousand years, is it conceivable that during all this time the doctrine of endless punishment was true, but that it was reserved to be made known in connection with the gospel?

If it be so, consider what follows: *First*, that the dispensation of grace is the very womb of the doctrine of endless punishment, — a most graceless (I say it reverently) accompaniment of grace! *Secondly*,

[1] Universalist Quarterly, April, 1878, p. 239.

heathen ignorance on this hypothesis transcends divine inspiration; for, during a large part of this period, the heathen world, and many of the Jews (probably through heathen influence), believed in this punishment, though divine inspiration gave no hint of it! *Thirdly*, if the doctrine sprang up among the Jews, independent of inspiration, then the spontaneity of Jewish thought antedates Christian revelation! No one of these positions would we for a moment accept. If the doctrine was true, and was kept in store for the wicked dead through all those four thousand years, what possible reason could be assigned for the delay in its announcement?

Is it presumptively salutary? Is it in its influence moral? If adapted to any age, would it not be to the more barbarous ages? Was not the world corrupt enough, morally necessitous enough, to demand its early promulgation? If God relied for four thousand years on the administration of temporal rewards and judgments, often including death itself, does he not thereby say these are salutary, these are most efficacious; these, on the whole and finally, will best promote the morality, virtue, and righteousness of the world?

Is the doctrine of endless punishment salutary, judged in the light of fact? It is very difficult, friends, for us to approach this question and look at the facts as they are. The very first duty we owe is that of love to God. The first great com-

mandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" and the second is like unto it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Now, it is pertinent to consider that whatever leads us thus truly and sincerely to love God with all our souls promotes morality, virtue, righteousness, and general obedience to the divine commandments; and whatever bars such love to God tends to disobedience of the divine commandments.

The question, then, narrows itself: Does a belief in endless punishment tend to promote love for the character and government of the Father, Law-giver, and Judge? Is the doctrine that God will finally bring us to an account, in which he will adjudge a very considerable portion of the race to everlasting woe, — meantime leaving the whole world in uncertainty to what extent individuals or their friends may be involved in this result, — fitted to awaken love to God? Does that conviction tend to draw out the affections unto the Father, and lead men in loving admiration and reverent adoration to worship the Most High God? If it does that, it is moral in its influence; if it does that, it is salutary upon the heart; if it does that, it promotes righteousness; if it does that, it moves men to general obedience to God. If it bars that, it is a hindrance to these great attainments for which God made us, and to

secure which he is administering the government of the world. If it begets abjectness rather than love; if it nurtures fear and dread, substituting ceremony for love, then is it not salutary. Its body of service lacks the soul of devotion. Multitudes of people in all ages have been moral, not because of their faith, but notwithstanding that faith.

Judging from the conditions of society in various ages, as bearing upon this subject, what have we to say? One thing is clearly manifest: the ages in which that doctrine has been most absolutely unquestioned have been darkest in crime and most abounding in misrule; they have been ages in which bloody deeds have most prevailed, and in which the race of mankind have been most agitated on every side. Coarseness of manners, defences of the "divine right of rulers," sovereignty of kings over the lives of their queens, cabinets, courtiers, and subjects, have flourished in the chilling breath of such a doctrine. Among all the American colleges to-day, that in which Orthodoxy is the rankest has proved itself the most disorderly.

When slavery spread a dark cloud over our entire South, the doctrine of the real brotherhood of the race could not gain a foothold south of Mason and Dixon's line. Calvinism could go there; Armenianism could go there; the Baptists, with doctrines cor-

responding to both, could go there; Presbyterianism could dwell there; every thing that taught a final separation and endless punishment could flourish abundantly in that soil. But the doctrine that God has truly "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell upon all the face of the earth," could gain no foothold there. Those of you who have read Mrs. Stowe's exhibition of the quality of religion and morals that prevailed through the century in which this institution was ripening to its overthrow, do not need to be told that the religions of the South were not greatly promotive of virtue, piety, and righteousness.

On the other hand, those periods when light has most prevailed; those lands where human culture has been most advanced; those regions where the powers of reason and judgment have been most strengthened, — have been the periods and countries where a more liberal view of God has prevailed. Then and there gentleness has reigned; then and there neighborly kindnesses have been most abounding; meekness and humility have most graced human character, and Phariseeism has been least obtrusive. If we can conclude any thing, therefore, from the relative conditions of the world in the various ages under the different views that have prevailed, as respects their influence upon morality, virtue, and righteousness, it is that the doctrine of endless punishment is not salutary.

Now, I should be doing great injustice were I to say that the masses of men who have believed in the doctrine of endless punishment have not thought it an important instrumentality for good. Undoubtedly, that has been their conviction. Undoubtedly, the doctrine has been greatly effective in begetting certain kinds of piety; but the quality of that piety, on its best side, may be confidently inferred from the uniform answer to the question, Do you really love God? "I hope I do," has for generations been the response, — as though it were a matter about which there could be any reasonable doubt.

But God has answered this question of the moral influence of the doctrine. He has in fact put away all doubt about it. He has utterly rejected it for four thousand years, — years in which it might be supposed to be salutary, if it could ever be so. Is it at all probable, friends, — I repeat the question, — that, after such protracted rejection and practical condemnation, it came into the world in the arms of the dispensation of grace? I would seriously commend these considerations as bearing also upon the probable error of even limited future punishment.

There is another subject that ought not to be lost sight of, in weighing the influence of this barbarous doctrine. It has been a fruitful source of scepticism in all the more enlightened periods of the Christian

Church. By scepticism, I do not mean the simple rejection of the so-called evangelical doctrines. The most reverent faith rejects them; and, because it is reverent, rejects them the more decidedly. I speak of that scepticism which denies revelation altogether, and which undertakes to say there is no God; or, if there be a God, that he has not communicated with the children of men. Parker and Rénan are often quoted as confirming the position that the Scriptures teach the doctrine of endless punishment, — a position admitted by them, while rejecting Christianity itself. The consideration should be added, that those distinguished men rejected the Scriptures, at least in part, because they believed them to teach that doctrine. Is it strange that they should so believe? They were reared in that faith; they had been bound by that faith; the Scripture language they had heard coupled with the doctrine from time immemorial had constrained their faith; and before the style of criticism which in our day has shown its falsity had come to be appreciated, they had rejected it, following in the pathway of Hobbes, Hume, Bolingbroke, and others.

All about us to-day are multitudes who either entirely disbelieve, or have but a cold and uninfluential faith in, the Scriptures, because of the supposition that they teach such doctrines. Let them once be seen to be delivered of such conceptions, and the common thought of God would

rise into a measure of faith which would make reverence for God and obedience to his law a daily delight.

Turn a moment, friends, and look upon the Scriptures of the New Testament in the light which Christ throws upon them. When our Saviour would teach the world the purpose and efficiency of his Mission, he calls attention to a few instructive parables: "What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?" (Luke xv. 8.) "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it; and when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke xv. 4–7). He shows us the prodigal son, also, wandering from his father's house, squandering his patrimony, scarred all over from head to foot with his transgressions; and yet, quickened by the memory of that father's house and the abundance it contains, he arises and resolves to return, to make confession, and ask to be again received, though it be but as a hired servant (Luke xv. 11–32). Everywhere the Saviour teaches us the recovery of those "dead in trespasses and in

sins," and the bringing of them into the life of the gospel.

When the apostles would employ the highest motive to obedience, they speak as in the text: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." "I beseech you by the mercies of God," — this is the agency which constrains men to offer their bodies a living sacrifice. This acceptable service is also pronounced a reasonable one, as every heart feels it to be.

Behold, then, the world "dead in trespasses and in sins!" See it called unto newness of life! Deaf apparently to the entreaty, it need not therefore be despaired of. The promise through Christ is in the "fulness of times." He shall at length "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." In the fulness of his compassion, "he shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, — as showers that water the earth." "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." The prophecy shall be fulfilled that "in his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."

The persuasives of the apostle shall, in the cycle of human discipline, become efficient. The "mercies of God" shall prevail. "All kings shall fall

down before him; all nations shall serve him. . . . His name shall endure for ever; . . . all nations shall call him blessed. . . . And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen!" (Psalm lxxii.)

V.

WHAT UNIVERSALISM HAS TO SAY OF THE FUTURE LIFE.

"SO, WHEN THIS CORRUPTIBLE SHALL HAVE PUT ON INCORRUPTION, AND THIS MORTAL SHALL HAVE PUT ON IMMORTALITY, THEN SHALL BE BROUGHT TO PASS THE SAYING THAT IS WRITTEN, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY? THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN; AND THE STRENGTH OF SIN IS THE LAW. BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO GIVETH US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." — 1 *Corinthians*, XV. 54–57.

I PROPOSE to speak to you to-night of the Future Life, — its reality, its character. Of the importance of the problem I need not remark. No topic of human interest to which we could turn bears any comparison with it. Nay, all other interests together shrink into insignificance beside it.

Nor need I say that we are indebted exclusively to revelation for the hope of such a life. Instinct may yearn for it; analogy may suggest it; reason may declare it probable, — but no one of these, nor all of them together, can affirm it. For an assured hope in a life beyond the grave we are indebted to revelation, and to revelation alone.

Since philosophy is incompetent to make known such a life, it is still more incompetent to determine its characteristics. If our philosophy cannot inform us of the existence of an unknown island, still less can it determine the number and height of its mountains, or the course and breadth of its rivers. So, if philosophy cannot assure us that we shall live again, it cannot assure us of the duration of that life; nor of the moral qualities that will pertain to it; nor yet of the objects of attention that will constitute its chief interest.

A different view, I am aware, somewhat widely prevails. The fact of a future life being established, philosophy, it is supposed, may step in and determine its details. It should be observed, however, that whatever is necessarily involved in the fact of a future life, and is deducible therefrom, is held more properly on the basis of revelation than of philosophy. For example: when the Scriptures promise us life beyond the grave, they virtually assure us that we shall remain the same persons; that we shall know that we have lived before; that, in a word, we shall retain our identity.

What is thus involved on the side of Scripture promise is included subjectively in the hope that promise begets. Of no avail would it be to hope for a future existence so isolated from our present being as to furnish no links of connection. As well might we cease to be, and some other person live in our

stead. Consciousness that we have lived before is the very substance of such a hope. Not only, therefore, must we be the same person there that we have been here, but we must know that we are the same. Our memory of ourselves must be so comprehensive as to make us conscious of our identity.

In the same way alone can we find consolation on the loss of friends. In the resurrection they must retain their identity, and must recognize us, and be recognized by us. Thus mutually knowing ourselves and each other, the promise and the hope of immortal life are adequately fulfilled.

Now, say our philosophers, if we retain our identity in the next world, we must carry with us all that goes to make up our present being, — our affections, moods, emotions, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, purposes and aims; and, in a word, our present characters.

This proposition contains a manifest confusion of ideas. Identity primarily pertains alone to our personality; secondarily, to our nature as beings of perception, reason, judgment, and conscience, requisite to give an assured home to our personality. Nothing that is changeable about us can be included in this category. Our moods, therefore, our objects of affection, our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, and the like, — all of which are changeable, — must be excluded. These may or may not remain the same. Our character as rational and responsible

beings, distinguishing us from all other creatures, is unchangeable; but our *moral* character, which makes us censurable or meritorious, may change from year to year: often does change even from day to day. Identity, on the other hand, continues the same, not only from the cradle to the grave, but doubtless throughout the entire duration of our being.

Revelation, therefore, in assuring us of a future life, virtually assures us that we shall retain our identity in that future life; but it by no means assures us that we shall, on that account, or for that reason, be the subject of no change of mood, affection, emotion, hope or fear, joy or sorrow, purpose or aim, or any thing that goes to make up moral character. These, in our past experience, have been the subjects of continual change; while our identity in its very nature defies all change. It appears, then, that nothing can be predicated upon the continuance of our identity in respect to the continuance of our merit or demerit, nor of the rewards and punishments consequent thereon.

Nor is the argument for future punishment, based upon conscience, more successful. Conscience, it is claimed, is the voice of God within us. It discerns the qualities of right and wrong, infallibly approving the right and condemning the wrong. While its condemnation of the wrong-doer must be regarded as among the Divine means of retribution, its prophecy of punishment to come, it is assumed, is proof

that further judgment is in store. And when that prophecy, as is often the case, is announced in the very hour of death, it is conclusive of punishment beyond the grave.

Let it be observed that we are not now discussing the truth or falsity of the doctrine of future punishment, but simply testing the conclusiveness or inconclusiveness of certain philosophical arguments for that doctrine. The problem as involved in conscience needs to be very carefully stated.

Conscience may be said to be made up of two elements, — the one variable, and the other invariable. The one embraces the intelligence and judgment to which we have attained respecting any moral problem; the other includes the sense of obligation to do the right and abstain from the wrong which we have come to recognize, and that sense of self-approval or self-condemnation which we experience when we do, or fail to do, what we think our duty.

In the discharge of this latter function, conscience may be said to act uniformly; commanding us to do what we think is right, and rewarding us accordingly. In the rendering of this service, conscience cannot be suborned. It invariably condemns us when we think we have done wrong; it as invariably approves us when we think we have done right.

But what we think about any moral problem, and how we judge its right and wrong, depend upon our intelligence, education, culture, and all moulding in-

fluences. Many treat this topic as though conscience were possessed of a private intelligence of its own; while, as a matter of fact, it acts and must act under the same general intelligence that controls all other faculties of our being. We are delighted with whatever we think is beautiful, however our taste may be at fault. We are charmed with what seems to us good music, however our ear may be untrained. We eagerly pursue what we think of transcendent interest, however unworthy it may really be of our rational regard.

It will be seen, then, that what our philosophers dignify with the name of prophecy of conscience, is simply what our education, intelligence, and judgment lead us to expect; which expectations spring not from the invariable but from the variable element of conscience. All branches of the Christian Church, both North and South, for a long period thought it a duty to uphold slavery, and were approved by their respective consciences. Now that the institution has been abolished, it is not difficult to perceive that the former conscience was somehow at fault. At this very day, the great body of the clergy of all sects think dram-drinking a moral wrong, and would be self-condemned if they indulged in it; while not a few in our cities profess to think it right, and indulge in the practice with self-approval. Meantime, conscience remains true to its function, — rewarding us when we do what we think is

right; punishing us when we do what we think is wrong.

You leave your horse at the door. A thief leaps into the carriage and drives away at the top of his speed. Knowing the organization of society about him, as respects criminal law, he continually looks behind him in apprehension of a constable's approach. As he nears a railway station, where a telegram may have preceded him, his apprehensions are equally divided between front and rear, — not knowing in which direction his dangers are greatest. Would it not be a little absurd to speak of this man's conscience prophesying telegrams and constables?

Given a man educated and still a full believer in the doctrine that this life is simply one of probation, and the next exclusively one of retribution, and he will expect future punishment. That expectation springs, not from his moral sense, but from his general conviction. Place over against such a man the veteran atheist whom I once met, and who, a few days before his death, at ninety-five years of age, declared that he "believed in no God but Nature, and no life beyond the grave." That man's conscience did not prophesy future punishment: contrariwise, only annihilation and rest.

Most of the practical problems of life are simple, and therefore easily resolved. About these the consciences of men of the same age and country rarely differ. But not a few of the very simplest have been

so presented to a perverted understanding in the darker ages of the world as to override both parental and filial affection, and suppress all the holier light of Nature. Conscience just as strongly commends obedience to the dictates of such perverted judgment as it does to the behests of the most enlightened understanding. The very general looking beyond oneself for retribution shows to what extent men have failed to recognize conscience as God's retributive agent within us.

Again, it is alleged that memory insures future pain as a consequence of our present sinfulness. We never can recall a past transgression, we are told, without a pang of remorse in view of it; just as the recollection of a good deed, and especially a virtuous act performed at great sacrifice, brings satisfaction and delight. Now as memory will survive in the next world, — being an essential element in the preservation of our identity, — and as the memory of our manifold sins will undoubtedly be among the things it will recall, it follows that the pangs of remorse will be proportionately experienced.

Let it be noticed that this is stating the proposition absolutely. It alleges that the memory of a sin necessarily brings remorse. If this be so, several important conclusions will follow.

First, if one sin remembered gives remorse, every sin remembered will give additional remorse; and a degree of remorsefulness past description may follow.

Secondly, if a remembrance of past sins as we enter upon the next life necessarily brings remorse, then the like remembrance of them at any distant period in eternity will continue to bring a like remorse; and if memory shall continue for ever, the remorse resulting from its action must continue for ever. Every sin is a fact in history which cannot be removed. Memory itself is immortal. Whenever it recurs to past transgression, it necessarily brings remorse. It follows that remorse is immortal in the soul that has sinned. This reasoning would not only establish the fact of future, but equally that of endless, punishment.

Thirdly, since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and since memory will be to all a like reminder of their moral unworthiness, it follows that all souls will experience not only future but endless remorse in view of the sins of this life. We are thus led, by the premises furnished, step by step, not only to the supposed salutary doctrine of future punishment for the incorrigible, but to the very comforting doctrine of endless punishment for the whole family of man, both the penitent and the impenitent.

We all feel, of course, by this time, that there is some mistake either in the premises or in the reasoning. The conclusions, surely, cannot be accepted.

The error is a palpable one. It is not true that when memory recalls a past wrong, it necessarily brings remorse. Such a proposition overlooks the

great fact of Christian forgiveness. The promise is as true now as of old, that he who "seeks shall find;" "to him that knocketh it shall be opened." To such the prophetic grace still applies: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18). Of the soul thus forgiven the Apostolic declaration holds good: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom. viii. 1). To the penitent the promise ever is: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. viii. 12).

The revelator puts the question now before us beyond cavil. He represents all rational beings as remembering their sins, as remembering their redemption from them through the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29), and as rendering him ascriptions of praise in grateful and blessed acknowledgment of their redemption: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!" (Rev. v. 12, 13.)

It would appear, then, that the problem of future punishment cannot be resolved by the fact that our identity will be for ever preserved; nor on the ground that conscience prophesies future punishment; nor yet on the ground that the memory of transgression necessarily gives pain. The doctrine is true, if true at all, for quite other reasons than these.

Those who are confident that philosophy determines its truth, turn now to the demands of justice. Every man must be rewarded according to his works. God visits "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, . . . but glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good, . . . for there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. ii. 8–11). Now, as it often happens that the last act of a man is a sinful one, and as justice must have its claim, punishment, it is thought, necessarily awaits such a man after death.

No subject of study can be more profitable for us than the workings of Divine justice. When fully analyzed, its aims are manifest, and its methods simple.

First, as a divine principle, justice springs out of the relations of God and man. All that we are and have we owe to the infinite Father. Our various powers constitute us in his image. All the delights of holy love are made possible to us by the nature he has given us, and the wondrous universe in which he has placed us. Every capability of good involves

our subjective needs, and those objective blessings provided us of God as the supply of these needs. "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. xi. 36.)

What can be more just, then, than that God should require our supreme affection? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. xxii. 37–40). This is the great, the primary, the abiding claim of justice; a claim it will never give over; a claim that cannot change; a claim to secure which all its dealings with man, all the penalties of the law, and all the providences of God are directed.

Secondly, this claim no man has fully rendered; and all have, therefore, become amenable to the demands of the law. To secure the original claim, God visits man in chastisements. He makes no change in principle nor in purpose. He interposes no penalty that would bar the claim for the violation of which it is inflicted. Least of all can that justice which primarily requires love to God ever rest in eternal hate of God, whatever woes such hate may bring. The penalty therefore is limited, and the end is love; or justice is for ever despoiled.

Thirdly, since obedience to the law is a moral fact, disobedience is likewise a moral fact; and as every domain has its own sanctions, the moral domain has moral sanctions. Sin, therefore, which is a fact of the moral nature, brings upon itself the penalty or condemnation which that nature can inflict. It is immediate, it is just; for it will be severe, or otherwise, according to the light sinned against. It springs up spontaneously with the consciousness of sin. Hence, "the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa. lvii. 31). Thus sin is the very seed of woe: it brings upon itself its own penalty. Not measure for measure is given; rather it is a stream of bitter waters flowing from a bitter fountain. Dry up the fountain, and the stream will cease.

Fourthly, the same act which violates a known moral obligation, and is therefore a sin, may violate various physical or social laws; which violation, strictly speaking, is not a sin, but may bring corresponding physical or social consequences. These, be it remembered, are the sanctions of physical or social laws, as moral condemnation is the sanction of the moral law.

Now condemnation of conscience, the proper punishment of sin, ceases when forgiveness is accepted. It is not a question of specific acts, receiving a specific amount of punishment. It is rather one of

moral condition, out of which flow moral consequences both retributive and just. Penitence and faith change that moral condition, and the consequences cease to flow. "He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24).

Faith is the pivot of this revolution. There is a moment when one comes to believe; a moment when he comes into possession of "everlasting life." No matter what was the last preceding act. That act was the outflowing of the unbelieving heart, in which still abode condemnation. "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16). How long? As long as he does not believe. This is the just sanction of the moral law. The moment he believes, "he hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation;" that is, any more. The sinful condition is at an end; and, strictly speaking, the punishment is at an end. Justice now has secured its primary claims, — a believing, loving, loyal soul. It asks no more.

Nor is the fact changed, whether that moment in which faith is reached be the last moment of this life or the first moment of the next. Whatever may have been the last act of this life, if, in the opening of the next, faith and love shall come to be cherished, everlasting life will be enjoyed; punishment will have ceased, and justice will have gained its end.

Observe now, we are not saying that faith and love will be thus gained; we here submit only that there appears no reason why they may not be. This is a question of fact, and must be determined before we can say that punishment will or will not be continued in the life to come. Possibly revelation may throw some light upon it. We do not propose to discuss it at this stage of our remarks. Enough that it is seen that justice alone does not resolve the problem.

Justice requires faith, love, and obedience. It institutes means to secure these ends; it asks nothing beyond. These gained, justice does not delay the consummation of bliss. It does not wait to pour out additional vials of wrath upon the head of one who was a sinner, but is such no longer. For aught that philosophy or Scripture can say, justice will be satisfied that men shall believe and be saved; and the sooner the better, whether it be in this world or in the next.

Fifthly, it will be observed that in these reasonings we attribute no saving agency to death. Whatever else death may do, it does not save men. However it may suit the purposes of the devotees of error to misrepresent us on this point, they are absolutely without excuse. Death may deliver us from temptation. It may profoundly impress us as a fact. Viewed both *in futuro* and *in præsenti*, it may quicken our sensibilities to the wondrous truths of the gospel, whether manifested here in Christian

teaching and in divine providence, or revealed in the clearer light of eternity. But it cannot take the place of those truths, nor discharge their functions. We must hear Christ's word, and believe on God who sent him, or somehow gather the spirit of such hearing and faith. Then shall we have everlasting life. I would emphasize this point, both out of respect to the fathers, living and dead, and in justice to divine truth itself.

Sixthly, there are other consequences of our sins that may remain after punishment has ceased. Notwithstanding salvation comes of faith whensoever cherished; notwithstanding the proper punishment of sin then ceases and justice is satisfied, — it must not be concluded that all consequences of transgression therefore cease. There are results which are not retributive. Many of the physical consequences of improper living, whether knowingly or ignorantly incurred, remain for a long period, even through life. As when ignorantly incurred they are innocently endured, so when guiltily incurred, they may, after repentance, be in like manner innocently endured, — endured, not as penalty, but simply as unretributive consequences. This remains true, although down to the moment of repentance the intelligent conscience justly interpreted them as retributive.

Many are the ills of life, — sicknesses, accidents, effects of climate, — which are not punishments for our sins; as many are the blessings of life, — sun-

shine and rain, and social institutions, — which are not rewards of well-doing. There are likewise numerous consequences of our sins which are not removed when the proper penalty of sin has ceased. Many of these consequences are not ills; are not to be regretted; are even to be gratefully welcomed. One of the consequences of British oppression of her infant American colonies was the birth of a free and self-governing nation. Judas's betrayal of our Lord helped make manifest his absolute innocence. Among the consequences of the general hatred of the ruling Jews toward the Nazarene was the placing of his pure character in the strongest possible light, and the developing all the more clearly of that moral power which will save the world.

So all the events of human experience flow into the stream of time and help to impart new color to its waters, — not, indeed, necessarily their own color. As, in the wide field of chemical affinities, compounds often show the color of the elements to have been revolutionized, — so, in the moral chemistry of God, events born of hate, selfishness, or sin are often compounded in results gracious, philanthropic, and wise. In such fashion, under God, we may owe our highest good, in no small measure, to long catalogues of events which, as respects their human origin, were neither wise, commendable, nor good. Under the magic touch that blends the colors of the spectrum into the white light of the sun, it may be that all

the hues of human character, which have gilded or stained the pages of history, shall contribute to the spotlessness of the angelic host that shall sing around the throne of God, "Worthy the Lamb that was slain."

Turning back now to our problem, we inquire, Has philosophy any thing else to say in support of the doctrine of future punishment? Yes; it now takes up its final position. It says that there is a certain persistence of character which makes sudden change impossible; that there is a growing power in habit which tends to permanence in evil, so that persons dying in sin cannot but continue in it, at least for a time; and that the principles of the Divine government are ever the same, so that as we find them here we shall find them for ever.

I remark, first, we not unfrequently confound character with reputation. Character is what we are within ourselves and before God: reputation is what the world takes us to be. Character may be changed and reputation remain unchanged, at least for a considerable period. The real question, then, is not how we look on men, nor how permanent is our judgment of them, but what are they within themselves; and is it possible for them to turn at once from the wrong to the right?

To deny this is to say that what a man cannot help doing is nevertheless sin in him; that sin is the penalty of sin; and that such sin can be committed

when freedom is no longer possessed, — propositions that do not become the lips of philosophers.

But is it true that a man cannot suddenly turn from the wrong to the right? All history answers in the negative. The proximate fact of good or ill desert in a man is the will. When, accustomed to ways of sin, he seriously and finally wills henceforth to do right, — as many a man undoubtedly has willed, — his character is revolutionized. Some time may elapse before the change becomes known to his neighbors; but it is known at once to himself and to his God. The possibility and the practicability of this is not an open question. Life is a continual illustration of it. Hence the first of these positions breaks down.

Secondly, nor does the argument from the force of habit possess any more validity. Let me by no means undervalue the power of habit. It gives facility in all accustomed work. It makes increasingly easy the difficult tasks of life. It smooths the rugged path of duty. It reconciles one to unavoidable ills, and confirms that trustful faith which is the underlying joy of the soul. But against a demoralized will it has no power to bear a man on in duty.

So, with the bad man, habit gives a like facility to evil, increasing one's power of mischief, enlarging the scope of his vicious aims, and co-ordinating his powers in the execution of his wicked plans. But when he chooses to abandon his ways of transgression, habit has no power to force a continuance

of them. In a word, habit can give facility to both good and ill; but it has no power to coerce them.

Take an illustration which combines mind and muscle in the same functions. A young lady of sixteen, — of quick perceptions, good abilities, and excellent general attainments, but with no training in instrumental music, — sends for a teacher. She has learned the language of music, and knows the instrument to the extent that she can strike any given note. And yet, as she seats herself at the instrument, she passes from one note to another, and from one combination to another, with such tediousness, such a multitude of false strokes, such awkwardness of touch, such violations of time, and such jarring discords, — all continued day after day, — that you grow inexpressibly impatient under it, and wish the piano instruction were all given in the next street.

Five years roll away. Our painful toiler after harmony has become an adept. By long, diligent, and painstaking practice, she has mastered the instrument. A glance at the page takes in every note. Mind and muscle are now thoroughly co-ordinated. She thinks at her very fingers' ends. The most difficult passages are rendered with an ease and accuracy marvellous to behold, — while attention is seemingly directed quite aside.

We have here one of the finest illustrations possible of an intellectual and a physical habit combined. All the power that habit can gain is here possessed;

and whatever coercion habit in any case may exert, we may look for here. But we shall look for such power in vain. Wonderful as are the facility and ease of movement, there is no power of constraint. The young woman marries and settles in life; and when her first babe is laid in her arms she is absorbed in quite another style of music, — staccato, fortissimo, tremulo, crescendo; then diminuendo and pianissimo: ending in a long breve rest. Habit remains in its full force; but has no power whatever to bear away the young mother from the babe of her bosom to the instrument in the drawing-room, whether she will or no.

Turn to another intellectual habit, with an underlying moral drift, — namely, the habit of profanity. We all know the inveteracy of this habit, — so marked that we are accustomed to say of any one enslaved by it, "He cannot speak without an oath." And yet such a one may call at my house on business, and, from the moment he crosses the threshold till he recrosses it, not an oath escapes his lips. I come along aside two such men walking on the street. As I near them my ears are greeted with their accustomed blasphemy; as I exchange the morning salutations with them, their speech instantly becomes as reverent as my own; and during a further walk of fifteen minutes not a profane word is uttered. Whatever facility in vicious speech such men may have gained, they are under no constraint thereto when

they have a motive to avoid it; that is, when they do not choose such pastime.

Suppose, for a moment, we abandon this clear truth of the case, and admit what seems so desirable to our friends smitten with the salutariness of future punishment, — that there is a power in vicious habit to bear one on in wrong, *nolens volens*, until that habit shall have been weakened. What follows? Remember, this victim of habit is a sinner. It is the repetition of his sin that has formed this uncontrollable habit. He enters the future life, and is necessarily borne on by it in his accustomed pathway of sinning; each repetition strengthening the habit whence it sprung, increasing therefore the power of that habit, and making a further and longer course of sinning still more inevitable. Is the habit weakened? Contrariwise, it is strengthened. Add another period of like experience, and you will have the like result; and the longer this victim of habit continues in his sin, the stronger the habit becomes, and the darker the future that lies before him.

In the hands of a believer in endless punishment, this argument, though groundless as we have shown, is consistent; but, as an argument for future sin and limited punishment, it is contradictory and absurd. Its essential weakness is that it is radically false.

Thirdly, it remains for us to notice the fact of the permanence of the Divine laws as bearing on future

punishment. Of course the laws of God do not change. The principles of his government are ever the same. Those laws of themselves, however, do not perpetuate punishment in this world; no more will they in the world to come. It is man's relation to the law, as a transgressor, that insures the continuance of condemnation; and as long as that relation endures, whether in this world or in the next, the punishment will endure.

Now the fact to be established is that men will continue sinners in the future world, and thus stand in such relation to the law of God as involves punishment. This has not been proved. On no mere philosophical ground can it be proved. Men, all along the pathway of life, turn from good to ill; from ill to good; and from one degree of merit and demerit to another. Gather up all that philosophy can say, and it appears that men may continue sinners in the next life, and hence be punished there,—or they may not. All reasoning of the sort in hand comes short of the mark, until certain facts, which philosophy can never reach; are determined. For these we must look to the Scriptures; and to the Scriptures alone.

Perhaps I ought not to pass, without a word of remark, the proposition that a life of sin deadens the sensibilities and shrivels the moral nature; so that however one may be redeemed from sin and condemnation, he cannot enter, as he otherwise might have

entered, into the higher joys of heaven; nor can he share in so large a measure the blessedness of salvation. Such a man, it is alleged, experiences a kind of negative punishment in the loss sustained through undeveloped capacity.

Granting the deadened sensibilities and shrivelled moral nature, of which I am by no means sure, and all that remains of that soul is still saved. It feels no privation; experiences no lack; joins in ascriptions of praise to the Lamb; and, by the very terms of the problem, is fully blest, — blest to the extent of its capacity.

Now, if any thing remains that can be called retribution, be it so; I know of none to object. But, let it be observed, such speak without Scripture warrant; speak in a way that would involve others, whom we deem assuredly blest, in a like retribution. If the possession of capacities relatively less than others involves a negative retribution, what shall we say of those dying in infancy as compared with even the Neros and the Judases of the world? What shall we say of every generation of men, without reference to character, as compared with the preceding, which has had a longer time for development? What shall we say of the whole race of mankind as compared with the angelic hosts, which so immeasurably transcend them in capacity?

Thus do the various so-called philosophical considerations fall short of the mark. The truth is, in

attempting to resolve the high things of eternity, philosophy transcends its domain. Its wings are altogether inadequate for such a flight. Had it been otherwise, the world could have dispensed with revelation, — which it so sadly needed, and which God grant we may never undervalue!

We turn now to the Scriptures of inspiration, and inquire whether or not their light is as uncertain as that of philosophy. Does revelation clearly settle any thing concerning the future life? Scanty as the materials confessedly are for a science of the future, are they wholly wanting? We think not. The Scriptures do establish a few things. They map out the country, as it were; determine the headlands; and, in some sort, limit the uncertainties of the problem. Let us observe what some of these things are.

1. In the first place, the Scriptures establish the fact that there is no life after death anterior to the resurrection life. An "intermediate state," so called, in which men live dubiously, or dreamily, or sufferingly, before they are "raised," has no warrant in a sound exegesis. The doctrine, which the Church has sometimes taught, that in such an intermediate state the wicked are either prepared for the resurrection, or inured to the woes that shall come to them in greater severity after their final sentence, receives at the present very little favor.

The Scripture principally relied on in support of the doctrine is the following: "For Christ also hath

once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1 Pet. iii. 18–20). Our present purpose does not require a careful examination into the real meaning of this passage. On the face of it there are several difficulties in the way of applying it to the support of the doctrine of an "intermediate state." These have led some of the most considerate and learned of the commentators to reject altogether such an application. Dr. Adam Clarke, Archbishop Leighton, the learned Grotius, Calmet, and Dr. Hammond are of this number.[1] It is plain that such a doctrine should be accepted only on the clearest testimony; while a single passage, by no means free from obscurity in its terms, and confessedly capable of other expositions, would proffer but a slender support.

A much more serious consideration, however, is presented by St. Paul, who explicitly declares that "if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Cor. xv. 16–18).

[1] Paige's "Selections from Eminent Commentators," pp. 270–274.

It is plain that the phrase "in Christ" here has no limiting power. If understood of believers only, it cannot be supposed that believers had perished, while unbelievers had not. If it be supposed to indicate the hope for all the dead, — their lives being "hid with Christ in God," — it removes all ambiguity. Elsewhere throughout this connection the language is of the most general character, — "the dead" being the phrase continually employed.

Now, were there an intermediate state of conscious existence after death prior to the resurrection, the resurrection would not be essential to the continued life of the departed. It would not follow, therefore, that, "if the dead rise not," those who have "fallen asleep in Christ are perished." The first, then, that we know of men after death is in the resurrection.

2. In the second place, the Scriptures show this resurrection to be immediate. Paul says, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. i. 21). Were death a sleep and the resurrection delayed, to die could not be gain. "To live is Christ;" that is, the life of Paul is a good: "to die is gain;" that is, death introduces him to a greater good, — which could hardly be true, if a protracted sleep were to follow.

Again: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. i. 23). The necessary in-

ference is that should Paul depart, he would immediately "be with Christ;" thus confirming the implications of the former passage.

Then again he says, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1). The implication, if not affirmation, plainly is that, when the one house dissolves, we enter at once into the other. Hence we conclude the resurrection is immediate.

3. The third fact established in the Scriptures is, the resurrection is universal. We do not adduce here John v. 28, 29; because the resurrection there referred to is clearly an awakening from death in sin: as in the 25th verse, which the whole context shows, and which puts it in harmony with Paul's teaching, elsewhere given, and with that of the Master himself. Paul had "hope toward God, . . . that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts xxiv. 15). When also he discusses the subject at large, in his first letter to the Corinthians, he speaks continually of "the dead,"—a phrase most general in its character; a phrase that can hardly be construed as meaning less than all the dead. But Paul puts the universality of the resurrection beyond controversy when he says, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22). It by no means

weakens the testimony as bearing on this point, though Paul may have had a more emphatic reference to moral condition than to the mere fact of the future life; because the former would necessarily imply the latter.

The Saviour, too, in his reply to the Sadducees, speaks very significantly: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. xxii. 31, 32). Here the unqualified use of the phrases, "the dead," and "the living," compel us to suppose that all the dead and all the living are included. Such testimony is abundant, and leads us to the conclusion that the resurrection will be universal.

Having thus seen that existence in the resurrection is the only existence after death taught us in the Scriptures; that the resurrection takes place immediately upon death, — fairly construing the word immediately, and not pressing it to mean instantly; and that the resurrection will be universal, embracing mankind of all nations, ages, climes, degrees, and conditions, — it remains only that we inquire, What is the character of that resurrection state?

4. We have already seen that philosophy can here give us no practical information. Light must come, if it can be had at all, from the Holy Scriptures.

They, and they alone, can teach us whether the resurrection is final, or whether it is but one of a series of events of like character and import. And if, as we think, it be an ultimate or final state of existence, the Scriptures alone can tell us whether it is a mortal or an immortal state; a sinful or a sinless condition. So all-important and engrossing are these elements of the problem, that we cannot well suppose that they are left in doubt.

The source of information to which we first and instinctively turn, is the Lord himself. As his ministry wore on, and it came to be understood that he taught a resurrection of the dead, — so far agreeing with the Pharisees, and of course offending the Sadducees, their great rivals for popular influence, — he could not fail to arouse against himself the most pointed Sadducean opposition.

Accordingly, leaders of that sect came to him with a carefully prepared problem: "Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren; and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her" (Matt. xxii. 24–28).

Let it be observed that nothing is alleged touching

the character of the parties in question. All that you are permitted to know about them, all that enters into the problem, is that seven brothers successively married the same woman. The difficulty they present is not at all one of character, but simply one of embarrassment growing out of these domestic relations.

In replying to the question thus submitted to him, the Saviour does not intimate that the elements of the problem are in any wise deficient; that before he can declare their condition in the resurrection he must know their character. He takes the problem as they gave it him, and proceeds at once to deal with it.

His first remark shows the direction of his thought. "Ye do err," — not because ye misconceive the previous character of the parties involved; not a word of all this, — but "ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. xxii. 29). Christ proceeds at once to remove their difficulty by an appeal to the power of God. "For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage" (Mark xii. 25). Had the Saviour stopped here, the Sadducees would probably have wondered what would become of those domestic affections which make the relationship of husband and wife so dear. Like many another, they were probably ready to say, "If I am not to love my husband or my wife more tenderly than I love any-

body else, heaven itself would have no charm for me." Such "do err, not knowing the power of God."

Have you never known an orphan girl — a mere waif upon the river of life — adopted into a large family of daughters, where she was treated as a sister, and where, after years had rolled away, it was said of her, "She is equally dear with the rest"? "We know no differences between her and our own daughters," said the parents. "She is as dear to us as we are to each other," said the sisters. Not for a moment was it suspected that parental or sisterly affection had declined in that family; but an affection equally pure, possibly more unselfish, had grown up for one who had no family claim, and the cherishing of which had weakened no family bond. So, under the penetrating and all-embracing love which moved Christ to die even for his enemies, the *world* may be welcomed to a more ardent affection than man has ever known, — an affection in which none of the sweetness of domestic loves will be lost, but which will intensify, exalt, and purify them for ever.

But the Saviour did not stop there. Having said, "When they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage," he adds, "Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being children of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 36). He thus declares their immortality, — their equality with the angels,

— including, we may venture to believe, the breadth and purity of angelic loves, and their relation to God as his children in some sense in which that relation did not before exist, and which was consequent upon the resurrection.

Paul has the same thought. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 20, 21). This was a liberty, as he subsequently shows, consequent upon "the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23). "Waiting for the adoption," he calls it; evidently suggesting a relation to God as his children, consequent upon that adoption, equivalent to the Saviour's phrase, "And are the children of God, being children of the resurrection."

The aspects thus presented are still further strengthened by the appeal which our Saviour now makes to the Scriptures, quoting Moses and commenting thereon. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For God is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him" (Luke xx. 37, 38). If "all live unto him," their "adoption" is complete. They are then, indeed, "the children of God, being children of the resur-

rection," — the children of God in a sense in which they were not his children until they became children of the resurrection; that is, until they were made "equal unto the angels."

What facts, now, touching the future life, has the Saviour substantially determined? 1. All hope of a future life rests upon the resurrection. 2. "The dead" were already raised, as implied by Moses. 3. They shall die no more, and are therefore immortal. 4. Being children of the resurrection, they are the children of God in a new sense; and, as Paul puts it, are "delivered from this bondage of corruption." 5. They are equal unto the angels. 6. They all live to God. Will any one venture to say that sin or its penalty still remains?

Thus far our citations from Paul have been mainly from his letters to the Romans and to the Philippians. We have seen that Paul represents the resurrection as immediate, universal, and the only state of conscious being after death. Does he throw any light upon the character of those who are or shall be raised?

Having illustrated the possibility of celestial bodies as distinguished from terrestrial, by reference to the great differences and variety of the latter; and having adduced the differing glories of the heavenly bodies, not as suggesting differences in the glory of different persons in the resurrection, but rather differences in the glory of the celestial as compared

with the terrestrial, — he proceeds to say: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. xv. 42–44).

This language has special significance when we remember that Paul evidently does not teach the resurrection of the body. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1). Thus we rise into incorruption, — into a house "eternal in the heavens."

Presenting then the last Adam as "a quickening spirit," justifying the hope of a "spiritual body," the apostle points us to the first man who "is of the earth, earthy;" and to the second man who "is the Lord from heaven," — assuring us that "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 49). Lest any mistake should arise, he adds: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. xv. 50).

Finally, summing up his discussion, he says: "So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 54–57).

Paul, then, teaches a future life in and through the resurrection alone; teaches that it is immediate; that it is universal, so that whatever he affirms of one, he affirms of all; that it is a resurrection in honor, in power, in glory, in incorruption, and in the image of the Lord from heaven. He teaches that death will then be swallowed up in victory; and that the sting of death, which is sin, will then be destroyed.

These are facts touching the future life to which philosophy, simply as such, could never attain,—facts which philosophy can neither affirm nor deny, but to which it readily adjusts itself in every particular. Whatever may be that moral influence or redeeming grace that shall make the resurrection a sinless state, there will undoubtedly be involved all the essentials of penitence, faith, forgiveness, and salvation, as in the conversions transpiring here. That they are wrought, not by the agency of death, but by the power of divine truth, more perfectly understood then than now, Paul himself clearly intimates. "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. xiii. 9–12).

This increased light and knowledge, and consequently increased redeeming power, favored by the removal of all the fleshly appetites and the vain shows and pride of life, would naturally work the very results which Paul describes as characterizing the only life beyond the grave of which he gives us any knowledge.

The apostle John, also, appears to entertain the same hope. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John iii. 2). An atheist, denying the being of a God and the reality of a future life, is raised from the dead by the power of Almighty God, in whose fatherly presence he will stand. Will he any longer deny a future life? Will he any longer deny the existence of God? Can he be unaffected by a view of his tender compassion and infinite love? Can he fail to feel the glow of filial gratitude in return? Since the gracious Father, the loving Saviour, the glory of the just, and all the blessedness of purity and obedience, in contrast with the hideousness of vice

and disobedience, shall then clearly appear, can any soul be unmoved?

When man is won unto loving obedience, sin is loathed and repented of; faith is devoutly cherished; the divine forgiveness is gratefully accepted; justice, having secured its primary claim, is abundantly satisfied; and the child of the great God is saved "by the power of God;" "by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;" by the very influences which are the soul of the gospel; for which the name of Christ for ever stands, making it, in verity, salvation by Christ.

This blessedness solicits our faith, love, and obedience to-day. Let us accept it; and, at the same time, hope for those who are in darkness as waiting the light. Casting aside all vain philosophy, let the Scriptures of truth speak to our inmost souls.

THE END.

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